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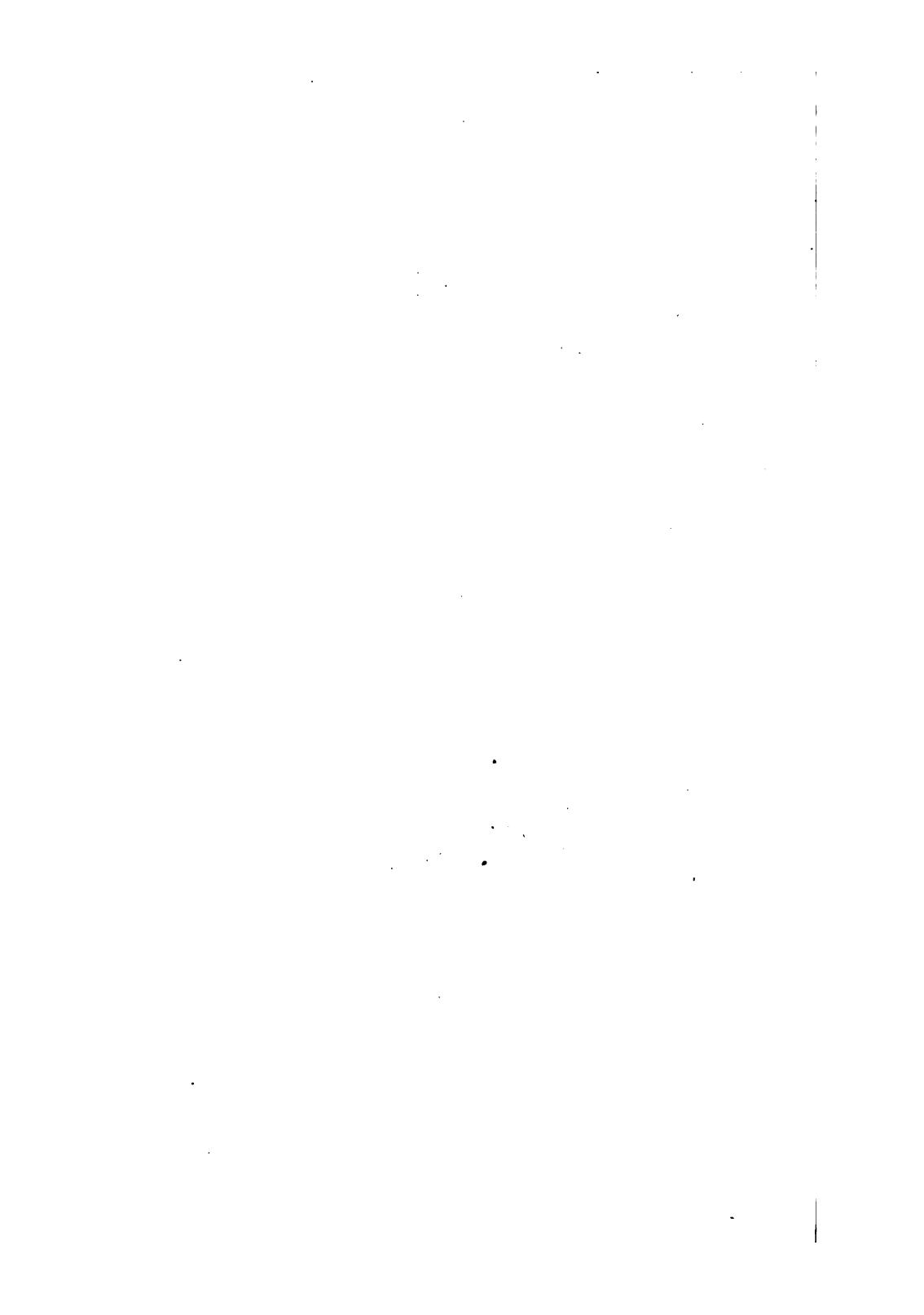
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H I R E L L.

A Novel.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "ABEL DRAKE'S WIFE."

"If the first among the problems of life be how to establish the peace and restore the balance of the inward being—"

"I know not what true definition there is for any age or people of the highest excellence of any kind, unless it be perpetual effort upward in pursuit of an object higher than ourselves, higher than our works, higher even than our hopes, yet beckoning us on from hour to hour, and always permitting us to apprehend in part."

"It is, I think, an observation of St. Augustine, that those periods are critical and formidable, when the power of putting questions runs greatly in advance of the pains to answer them. Such appears to be the period in which we live."

W. E. GLADSTONE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE WANDERER	1
II. A WELSH ANTIQUARY	16
III. ARE THE ENGLISH ANGLO-SAXONS ? A SKETCH WHICH IMPATIENT READERS MAY PASS BY UNREAD	36
IV. HUGH MAKES MISCHIEF	89
V. A VISITOR AT THE ABBEY FARM	97
VI. HUGH'S LAST HOURS AT HOME	105
VII. THE VIRGIN MARTYR	118
VIII. AFTERNOON AT DOLA' HUDOL	125
IX. THE MOUNTAIN ORCHARD	144
X. MR. CUNLIFF AGAIN VISITS DOLA' HUDOL . .	148
XI. HUGH'S FIRST LETTER HOME	160
XII. DOES HE STAY OR GO ?	170
XIII. A FRIENDLY LETTER	176
XIV. EWYN Y RHAIAADR	196

CHAPTER	PAGE
XV. HARD QUESTIONS	240
XVI. KEZIA TURNS PERVERSE	248
XVII. THE REVEREND EPHRAIM JONES SENDS EVIL NEWS	262
XVIII. THE IRONY OF FORTUNE	265
XIX. KEZIA PROVES AN UNFAITHFUL STEWARD	285

ERRATA.

Chap. III, p. 58—the word “then” in the passage, “and then subdued all Britain,” should be in brackets, “[then],” as it does not belong to the quotation.
” ” p. 72—“genetically” should be “generatively.”
” ” p. 88—the marks of quotation should be omitted in, “a creation in travail.”

HIRELL.

CHAPTER I.

THE WANDERER.

ONE evening Hugh and Kezia went to a chapel meeting at Aber. They were to stay the night with some friends there, that they might the next day pack Kezia's furniture ready for its removal to Rymer's rooms at Bod Elian.

Hirell and her father had spent a quiet evening together, for the rain had come on with increased violence, and put a stop to all work out of doors.

They were sitting at one end of the long kitchen table, Elias reading and Hirell knitting. They had no candle, they could no longer afford

such a luxury ; but on the table over between them stood a curious little machine, that held in something like a pair of nippers, a rush that had been soaked in common household grease. When one rush burnt out, which it did in very few minutes, Elias would take another from a little bundle that lay close at his hand, light it and insert it in the place of the burnt one. He managed this so dexterously that Hirell never had to stop the rapid movement of her needles for the want of light.

As the rain beat on the long low window, Elias raised his head with a troubled look.

"Are you sure, Hirell," he asked, "that Mr. Rymer is not in his room?"

"Quite," she answered, "the door is open. You can see right in as you pass."

"Surely he must have sought some shelter."

"I hope so," said Hirell.

"Is that the passage door? Yes—listen—I think he has come in," said Elias.

They listened, heard footsteps, a loud exclamation from Nanny, and then a faint shivering voice cry,

"My God ! No fire ?"

"Oh, father, go," said Hirell, "he is very ill."

Elias rose and went quickly to the outer kitchen. The rush burnt down to the end, and Hirell, neglecting to light another, was left in darkness.

She went a few yards towards the open door, and stood still listening.

She heard Elias cross the kitchen and pause. Then she heard his voice speaking clearly and sharply,

"Go, Sir, to your room and take off these wet things. I will come myself and light you a fire."

"I cannot—I cannot move," replied the faint shuddering voice. "Let me be still. Leave me to myself."

"I shall not," said Elias with increasing sternness. "I have left you to yourself too long. You are killing yourself, and you know it. I will no more permit you to trifle with your own life in this house, than I would with another's."

Then Hirell heard her father's footsteps

coming back quickly, and in a minute he met her where she stood.

“ Give me a light, Hirell, in the lantern. I must saddle Gwen and go to Tan-y-Llyn for Dr. Robarts.”

“ Is he very ill then, father ?”

“ I never saw anyone look worse—quick, Hirell—send Nanny out to help me.”

She got them the lantern, and then stood alone in the great dark kitchen, watching the pale gleams of light across the window as her father and Nanny moved about the yard, and in and out of the stable and harness shed.

In a few minutes she heard Gwen’s quick, sure-footed trot on the wet road, and Nanny running beside it to open the gate.

Then Nanny came back and fell to chopping wood in one of the sheds, in order to fulfil her master’s instructions to light a large fire in the lodger’s room.

Meanwhile Hirell had heard several times something like a moan, and a sound as of teeth knocking together, which filled her with apprehensions.

Could she do nothing ? she asked herself,

feeling very helpless and very impatient at her helplessness.

Soon Nanny came in where he was with her bundle of sticks, and the next moment she heard her drop them, and cry sharply—

“ Miss Hirell ! Miss Hirell !”

Hirell was standing in the middle of the outer kitchen before Nanny had picked up her lantern.

Her steps had been swift and unhesitating as the impulse of pity and alarm, which the girl’s cry had awakened in her heart, towards the miserable stranger.

She saw a form huddled together at the end of the long oak-seat near the chimney ; and looked from it to Nanny, asking under her breath :

“ What, Nanny ?”

Nanny only pointed towards the bent form, and made a gesture of fright and perplexity.

The truth was, that Rymer had tried to rise, and had been seized with pain and stiffness, and thrown himself back with a moan of impatience and despair.

Hirell stood bewildered. What was she to do ?

She was not at all experienced in cases of illness. Nest Lloyd had tried to prevail upon her to visit with her the sick people under her care about Capel Illtyd ; but she was obliged to give up all thoughts of making a nurse or doctress of Hirell. She was like some wild creature in her extreme sensitiveness at the sight of physical pain. A consumptive cough made her tremble ; a cry of suffering filled her with almost passionate alarm ; the knowledge of some girl in the village being in a decline, would cost her days of melancholy thought and restlessness. The wise, careful Nest was shocked at her want of discretion and self-control before such people ; and thought it best to leave off taking her, for their sakes, as well as for Hirell's.

To Rymer's illness was added the fact that his reserve and isolation made it a great difficulty for her to approach him.

If she had found him in a fit or fainting, her hesitation to offer assistance would have been less ; but the very dejection and wretchedness of his attitude, showed his consciousness. And remembering how studiously he

had avoided all contact with her family ever since he entered Bod Elian, even her pity could not overcome her reluctance to intrude herself on his notice.

“Nanny,” she said in a low, timid voice ; “I think you had better make a fire here as Mr. Rymer seems too unwell to go to his room yet.”

Nanny set to work lighting a heap of dried furze and sticks in the huge, sooty chimney ; and while she did so Hirell came nearer, and stood in the smoke.

Rymer’s form was twisted round on the oak settle ; across the back of which his arms were laid, supporting his face.

When the fire began to give out a glow of light and warmth, he stirred, shivered, and turned towards it ; stooping so that his arms rested on his knees.

There was such an animal-like gratitude and helplessness in the expression of the figure, and white face as it watched the fire, that it gave Hirell courage to say :—

“It will burn brighter soon.”

Rymer’s grey sunken eyes looked up, and grew puzzled at the vision of grace and

sweetness that stood in the smoke, looking at him.

The young bright eyes, with their fulness of charity, puzzled him. It was such pure charity, unsullied by reproach or inquisitiveness. So unquestioning and large it was there seemed something angelic in it.

Who was it that looked at him thus ?

Gradually he remembered who it was ; he remembered Hirell, slowly and with difficulty, as one who, reading a stray line of beautiful poetry, might recall the poem to which it belongs.

Hirell had been almost fit to tremble at the sound of her own voice when she spoke to him. She fully expected him to answer her with anger ; and the most she hoped for had been sullen silence. She was therefore very much surprised, and her pity became greatly deepened when he said, in a voice trembling with gratitude, as he cowered towards the fire,

“ Thanks, thanks !”

At this she took courage and let a warm burst of pity out upon him in her voice and look :—

"It gets so cold here now at nights ; and the rain has been so heavy ; and you have been out in it all."

It was like part of the fire's delicious light and warmth to him hearing her speak so. As the warmth of the fire came penetrating through his wet clothes to his cold and aching body, so Hirell's voice and look, with its unquestioning kindness and comfort, stole through the heavy clinging mists of loneliness and depression that had gathered about his heart.

The fire blazed, filling the windy chimney with its light and roar. Rymer leaned down towards it, and let his body and mind wake from their numbness, and for the first time for many days know something like comfort. He forgot the noises of the winds and waters, the cries of lost cattle in the solitary hills where he had wandered, and of carrion birds, and remembered only the crackling of the fire, and the sweet fresh sound of Hirell's voice.

As a dog may try to hide from a cruel master, and nearly starve in the attempt, and creep back, weary, famished, cringing for the dryest bone, the meanest place at the feet

that had so spitefully used him, so had Rymer tried to hide from the world that had grown so bitter for him, and had returned to accept gratefully its meanest comfort.

Hirell stood on one side of the chimney, knitting, and Nanny on the other, with her hands on her hips, and a look of broad sympathy on her face, and sometimes she stooped to pick up fallen brands, and threw them back upon the fire.

They were all silent ; only the crackling of the fire or a shiver from Rymer broke the stillness.

And in this way more than an hour passed.

At last Elias came, and alone.

Dr. Robarts had been sent for to the Duke of Cornwall's mines, where an accident had taken place the day before.

Elias went straight up to Rymer.

"A lad at the mines has had his foot cut off," said he, bluntly ; "so you must do without the doctor till to-morrow morning. And after all, you can do yourself more service than he can do you."

The pale face bending down to the fire remained unmoved.

Hirell looked pained at her father's tone.

" You had better let me help you up to your room, Mr. Rymer," said Elias. And he helped him to rise, and upheld him with a strong arm as he dragged his stiff, aching limbs across the room.

Hirell stood watching them, expecting, with childish eagerness, one parting word or look, but the sick man did not once turn his head.

" Ill-mannered English brute !" said Nanny, who had noticed her young mistress's disappointment. " A fed dog wags his tail—but these English—Ugh !" and she kicked aside the lodger's wet boots with inexpressible contempt.

Elias made his patient swallow some warm broth, and in half an hour came down and said he was sleeping quietly.

In this, however, Mr. Rymer had deceived him, for he had but closed his eyes in the hope of getting rid of his rough impromptu doctor ; who had no sooner left him alone than he rose up on his elbow, and began to seek for something among his clothes by the bed-side.

He took from a pocket a little note that he

knew well by feeling as well as sight, and lay back on his pillow, with his eyes upon the note as if they read even in the darkness the words he knew so well — Catherine's last words to him—her little, almost illegible note she had been frightened into writing by his incessant watching and too evident alarm and suspense concerning her.

Waiting once, as usual, in the dusk, outside the wall of Dola' Hudol, by a spot where he knew she often stood at that hour, to watch the lights of the town so far below, and of the village so high above, kindling one by one,—waiting at this place, Rymer heard her coming by herself. Then he heard her pause, and in an instant his arms were on the low wall, his eyes and voice chaining her to the spot by their misery.

“Catherine, I cannot bear it—I must know.—How is he treating you ? Did he see me ? You are deadly pale, Catherine. Did he see me, then ? Are you suffering for it ?”

She stood still, her white face leaning a little forward, like the face of one who has had the voice of a dead person recalled to her memory, suddenly, startlingly.

He held his hand out, but at that movement she started, turned, and walked quickly away. He lost sight of her as she went among a little group of trees. Would he see her no more ?

Yes—the light dress fluttered out again. She came quickly to the wall, and went from it as quickly, without a word, a look to him.

But that little note had fallen at his feet. It contained few words, and none that gave him comfort—only such words, indeed, as drove him far from the only place he cared for in the world, and being banished from which made him hate every other place.

“ I cannot tell,” Catherine had written, “ what he knows or thinks—he is kind, but seems different from what he has ever been before. Suspense is killing me. Keep away, if you have any pity ; do not add this constant alarm which your presence about here gives me, to my other misery.”

For several days Rymer had kept out of sight of the walls and windows of Dola’ Hudol ; and had wandered on the mountains, exposed to all the fierce winds, and the frequent rains of the time, and only returned to seek the

shelter of a home, when he found himself at the last stage of exhaustion.

As he had sat leaning towards the fire, watching Hirell's five knitting-needles glittering in its light, there came for him one of those intervals of peace and quietness which will come, and sometimes inexplicably, to the greatest sufferers ; a breathing-space in which one can look upon one's own pain, and think of it almost as if it were another's. The delirious patient has some moment of the day or night when he remembers whose step has fallen lightest in the sick room, whose hand has been most kind, whose eyes have longest kept awake for him—or whose heart has been wounded most by his impatience. It is a merciful subsiding of the waters that we may see our own hearts for a little while, and discover there—and comfort ourselves with—the gifts of human grace and tenderness that sorrow's tide has brought us.

Such an interval had come just now for Rymer ; and he found his heart's storm-beaten shore plenteously strewn with such gifts, and he looked upon and tried to count them with tenderness and remorse.

But he could not count them ; they were innumerable—the delicate kindnesses that had been offered to and brutishly spurned by him, or churlishly accepted, since he first came to Bod Elian. To the gentle housekeeper, Kezia Williams, he knew that he owed many ; to Hugh some ; to Elias also a few ; but he knew that the lightest step, gentlest hand, and most watchful eye in the sick room of his soul all this time had been—

What was her strange name ? he asked ; and a second time he said it softly to himself —it and its meaning as Chamberlayne had told it to him—

“ Hirell—beam of light—angel.”

CHAPTER II.

A WELSH ANTIQUARY.

WHEN Hirell and Kezia went to meet Elias returning from his work in the lower fields next morning, they both asked anxiously about the lodger ; and Elias told them it seemed to him Mr. Rymer was in some kind of fever ; that he was quiet, and willing to see Dr. Robarts when he should come.

“ There is good in him,” said Elias ; “ he entreated me like a child to raise the blind, that he might see Criba Ban from where he lay.”

Hirell and Kezia both looked at Rymer’s little window, and from it to the mountain standing, kinglike, above the rest ; and both agreed there must be good in thoughts that could like to climb so high. Hirell felt too, in her own heart, that they would hardly be

content to rest there, for there was a flight of great snowy cloud-steps to take them higher still ; and the morning sky seemed unfolding brighter and more intense depths of blue.

It was Hugh's last breakfast with them before his departure for London. All had been arranged by the Reverend Ephraim Jones, for his entrance into the office of Messrs. Tidman, and his lodging with a Methodist friend, near the chapel where Ephraim Jones himself preached. Though he was not going till the evening, his two small boxes, and the old harp, already stood in the hall, packed, and labelled "London," and Nanny, whenever she could spare time, went and had a cry by them. More than one of the farm-labourers put their heads in at the door to have a peep at the wonderful address ; and several persons came up from Capel Illtyd, in the course of the morning, for the same purpose.

The game-keeper from Dola' Hudol came with a message from his master, who had always been a sort of patron of Hugh's, to ask him not to go without paying him a fare-

well visit. So Hugh had to unpack one of the boxes, and put on his best clothes to go down to the great house for half an hour or so.

He went the nearest way, going from the road at Capel Illtyd and across the fields down into the valley, and in his walk he found how true was the old Welsh proverb, that parting looks are magnifiers of beauty. Never before had the grass seemed to shine with such emerald brightness, or the plumage of the magpies and sea-gulls flashed above it so dazzlingly white. Was there any place in England where sea and land birds mingled as they did here, making such gladness and life in the air? Even the children playing at holding a grand *Eisteddfodau* in a ditch came in for a share of his rekindled admiration.

Surely only mountain air, and only Cambrian mountain air could make such tints and outlines, such hardy delicacy of bloom and graceful strength. Two farm girls passed him, and before they had well got by, they heard him singing a Welsh song :

"Full fair the Gleisiad* in the flood
Which sparkles 'neath the sun ;
And fair the thrush in green abode,
Spreading his wings in sportive fun ;
But fairer look, if truth be spoke,
The maids of County Merion."

As he stood waiting at the little side-door at Dola' Hudol, looking at the sheep grazing in the rich swelling meadow, even they reminded him how clumsy and ungainly the English sheep, which he had seen at Dolgarrog markets, were in comparison with those graceful, agile little creatures, whose pretty intelligent faces were to be seen peering fearlessly over the most giddy heights, along which they ran nimbly as mice.

Hugh was shown into the library, and left there to await Mr. Rhys, who had sent word to him to amuse himself with the harp, or look at anything he liked till he came to him.

Hugh however, remained standing just where the servant had left him, too much overpowered by the gloom and grandeur of the Welsh antiquarian's "holy of holies" to move hand or foot.

* The Salmon :—(Mr. Borrow's translation.)

He had often been in that room before, and been made supremely happy by a sight of those precious relics of the ancient glory of his country. Sometimes Mr. Rhys had read aloud to him from old manuscripts, sitting in his high-backed throne-like chair like a modern Don Quixote ; and sometimes he had made Hugh read, or play to him on the magnificent harp, while he leant back with eyes half-closed, revelling in dreams from which he always rose with a prouder carriage of the head, and more haughty step and voice. Hugh likewise would go home with an air of grand melancholy, inspired by the contemplation of his ancestral greatness, and require some rousing words from Elias, before he became sufficiently reconciled to the existing state of affairs, to be able to take his part in the work of the farm.

But in spite of old acquaintance, the library at Dola' Hudol impressed him that morning as much as ever its owner could have desired that a lowly and young Bardic retainer should be impressed by such a sanctuary.

Perhaps the contrast between the great exploits of the noble wearers of those helmets

bending over the door and window-frames, and his own narrow path of duty as carved out for him by the Reverend Ephraim Jones, made him feel more intensely his own humbled and their exalted state.

These relics and tokens of past greatness were not exposed in the common light of day.

Through the carving of an enormous piece of oak—part of a Gothic screen which blocked up one window, and through the stained glass of another window came such a light as should alone touch those rare mementos of Kymric glory. It showed the antiquity of the books in the dingy oak cases without irreverently exposing their dilapidations. Yet they had been wonderfully well preserved. It was easy to see by the equal yellowness of their pages, and the general dry, crumbling look of their bindings, that no student had given them such destructive usage as Time himself.

Several of these cases had glass slides, which revealed, not books, but vessels of pottery dug up from a British camp ; urns with human ashes ; two golden sickles of the Druids—one broken, one only a little chipped ; incense dishes ; a breastplate of richly em-

bossed gold, and several curious drinking-cups. But the most famous of these, the Hirlas, was placed on the slab of slate supposed to be stained by the blood of a martyred warrior. This slab was supported by two blocks of stone, which also had their own marvellous histories engraved upon them in three or four lines of Welsh poetry, now perfectly illegible (with the exception of a name or two) even to Mr. Rhys himself.

Upon this rude but venerated side-board stood the Hirlas—a long blue drinking-horn, rimmed with silver, and having attached to it a piece of parchment bearing the following lines in Welsh, from Owain Kyveiliog's poem of the Hirlas—

“This hour we dedicate to joy,
Then fill the Hirlas horn, my boy,
That shineth like the sea ;
Whose azure handles tipped with gold,
Invite the grasp of Britons bold,
The sons of liberty.”

Beside the Hirlas was another object on which Hugh's eyes rested with a certain wistful melancholy in their leave-taking glance.

It was not because he had any covetous de-

sire for this ancient and most precious of all his patron's possessions, or any deeper regret in the thought that he might never see it again, than the same thought gave him with regard to all the other things in the room, but because it reminded him of many a boyish ambition, the recollection of which made the taste of his present lot very bitter.

In looking at that bar of twisted gold, four feet long, flexible, bright, and hooked at both ends, Hugh was not now so much inspired with enthusiasm at the thought of how many of the greatest of his country had worn such an ornament as a mark of their rank or valour ; he had heard often enough from Mr. Rhys, how Aneurin the bard had worn one at the battle of Cattraeth ; and Boadicea, when leading the Britons to fight against Agricola. Before his eyes, too, attached to the golden torque, was the boast of Llywarch Hen, Prince and Poet—

“Four-and-twenty sons I have had,
Wearing the golden wreath, leaders of armies.”

In Hugh's country, *Dwyn y dorch*, (to win the torque), may occasionally be still heard as

a household phrase for winning the prize; and the young man who had ever loved to talk about the precious relic, had heard it applied to himself so frequently — *his* torque being fame and wealth — that now he could but look on the object before him with a sense of sharp disappointment and an irrepressible despondency, that made the grand antiquities of Dola' Hudol even dimmer to his eyes than the richly darkened windows made them.

But Hugh would not for worlds have had Mr. Rhys suspect him of any unmanly shrinking from a career his brother had with such difficulty opened for him; and in case he should come upon him suddenly while his throat was so uneasy in Kezia's new collar, and his eyes persisted in seeing the helmets of his patron's great grandfathers nodding tipsily over the doors and windows, he crept quietly to his old corner where the harp stood on a sort of little dais.

Kneeling on the step, and resting his cheek against the gold frame, his hands took from the strings a gentle and comforting sound; and he was soon able to look round him with unflinching eyes, and take his farewell of the

great spirits of the past, who seemed to him still to haunt the antiquary's room, swelling the gold breastplates and nodding the helmets. With the humility of the young and lowly bard of a great house, Hugh addressed them all in his wordless song. He told them that for the last time his soul drank to them humbly from the renowned Hirlas ; that he was to go forth to a contest arduous and inglorious ; to be no winner of the torque in this world, but a suppliant for it in that kingdom to which they had been gathered, and whose honours never tarnish, as that ancient torque, on which he looked, had tarnished.

Hugh's improvised farewell was very sweet and full of patient submission and subdued power.

The music reached the charming old morning room opening into the lawn, which seemed always to cast over it a reflection of its own soft, perpetual light.

Mr. Rhys heard Hugh's playing as he sat here, reading his "Times ;" and laying down his paper, listened attentively.

Mrs. Rhys was sitting near him, copying a faded little oilpainting, one of his most

valued heir-looms. She was succeeding with her task so well as to give him much pleasure, and just now she looked tranquil, almost happy.

She, also, heard Hugh's music, and glanced towards her husband with a smile, showing pleasant approval of his protégé's talent. His face, however was turned from her as he leant his elbow on the table, and his head on his hand, and gave his whole attention, as it seemed, to the unconscious Hugh.

It was not so much enjoyment of the music, as respect for the national instrument on which Hugh played, that the face of the descendant of the Welsh princes expressed, as he leant back in his chair listening with half-closed eyes. It was a peculiarly narrow face now, but once, when the cheeks were fuller, must have been of a perfect oval shape ; the eyes were large, and almost black ; the nose and mouth undisguised by any moustache, and retaining still a noble and graceful contour seldom seen on so old a face. The thick iron grey hair left bare almost too large and dome-shaped a forehead ; the eye brows were peculiarly fine-arched, and black ; and a beard of

patriarchal proportions hid the narrow chin, and half covered the broad chest.

Hugh's soft, distant music seemed to be burying the antiquary in profound thought.

"How well he plays," said Mrs. Rhys, speaking rather to herself than to him, and scarcely expecting him to hear her; but at the sound of her voice the dreamy and somewhat sad face, without looking towards her, became attentive, anxious, wistful. It was like the face of a judge who feels that he must weigh the slightest gesture, word, tone or look of a prisoner, as evidence from which to make a sentence of life or death.

Catherine had now become in a manner accustomed to this terrible judgment over-hanging her; she had felt it, had suffered under it from the moment when Cunliff left her, to meet her husband alone, after that last interview at the Maiden's Lake.

Mr. Rhys had hinted at no suspicion from that minute to this, when they sat together listening to Hugh's playing. Yet she knew as well what had been in his mind as if he had told her in words, how after hearing her talking with some one on the day of his

return, his finding her alone had greatly surprised him ; how he waited for some explanation from her, and how her continued silence on that point made him suffer.

She had striven, no human creature knew how hard, to ward off such an explanation, knowing it could bring forth only misery for both. She tried to forget her own suffering, and to make their reunion as happy as possible, that he might dread to sadden it by any expression of his doubts. And he did dread doing so ; her timid advances were so sweet to him, hiding his suspicion as opening rose leaves hide a thorn ; so that it was only when his heart received them with the old passion that he felt it still there, and still sharp and poisonous.

Looking up from her task at her husband's trouble-averted face, she asked herself how long this could last, how long they could both bear it. And how must it end ? Must she throw herself at his feet and tell him all before there could be peace for either ? Perhaps he would not believe in her or forgive her, and then what would her life be ? How then could her thoughts be kept from the

one who did so well know her, and believe in, and love her? No she must trust to her own courage and patience, and to time; confession, on the chance of her truth being doubted, was too desperate a risk.

Her greatest longing now was to do something to please him. She wished she could play to him like Hugh, or help him with his translations. How much she might do for him now that his young assistant was going away, if she had not been so ignorant of his beloved language, and all those things he cared for most!

“I am sorry your clever secretary is going away, Owen,” she said bending low over her painting. “I had almost made up my mind to ask you to let him teach me Welsh.”

The grave face lighted with sudden pleasure and surprise, which scarcely was perceptible in the voice as it said—

“Is it my ability or patience you doubt, that you don’t think me fit to be your teacher, Catherine?”

“*My* ability and *your* patience,” she replied, smiling.

“I don’t think it would take many experi-

ments to remove both doubts from your mind—but do you wish it seriously?"

"Not only seriously, but anxiously, Owen. Will you teach me?"

And she laid down her brush, and looked full at him, with yearning eyes, tearful but strong; that seemed to declare how much more she would fain do, if it were possible to remove the cloud that had come between them.

The expression of her face and voice moved him much. He rose and went to her.

"It used to be the custom," he said, lifting her hand in a very courtly manner, "for pupils to kiss their teacher's hand. Let me reverse the custom, Catherine, and thank you with all my heart."

She smiled with almost her old brightness, and rising slipped her hand in his arm, saying—

"And now you must not keep Hugh Morgan waiting any longer. But I may come with you, may I not? I should like to thank him for playing for me so often last year; and give him some little remembrance, that

he may not go telling everybody his patron has a stingy English wife."

Hugh heard their voices and brought his farewell rhapsody to a close.

He looked so slim and boyish as he came down from the daïs, that Mrs. Rhys felt quite a warm pity at the thought of what his family must suffer, at sending him alone into a world so utterly strange to him as London.

" You have been playing very charmingly, my lad," she said; " I am almost as sorry as Mr. Rhys to lose you."

Hugh blushed scarlet with pleasure, as he made his bow.

" And so Hugh," said his patron shaking hands with him, " you are going the way of all our young men of talent—deserting Cambria at the call of England—eh ?"

" Rather, sir, at the call of fortune. What can I possibly do here but starve ?"

" Ah, yes ; that is true. It was different though in the old days, when our country was as a very light among the nations ; and when to come to Wales rather than to go from it, was the aim of the young, the ambitious—and of those whom God had gifted

with a spark of his own nature—that which we call awen—the English, genius.”

“Ah, sir, I shall hear no more about those old days, but I am always dreaming about them, and wondering if they can ever be brought back.”

“Never, Hugh—never! But this you may do—help to make the world understand what we have been, and what we are. Ah—how we forget things! I remember now. I meant to have read you a little paper I have been preparing in my leisure hours, a sort of preliminary sketch for a more elaborate essay some day to be prepared.”

“Is it, sir, too much to ask that I might hear it now?”

“Not now, Hugh; not now. Mrs. Rhys loves Wales I am sure—but she may be readily excused for not caring to hear prosy narratives about Britons and Saxons, and—”

“Owen,” she interposed, speaking earnestly, “will you believe me if I say you could hardly give me a greater pleasure, than to read this paper to Hugh and to me.”

He looked at her a moment in surprise, then a scarcely perceptible colour stole into his

cheek ; and when he spoke again it was with a smile of quite youthful unaffected gratification—that she saw, and was in turn deeply affected by.

“ But you know, Catherine—” he began, as if he could not even yet venture to realise as his own the pleasure he felt.

“ I know, Owen, I have been very silly and ungrateful in past times, when you have sought to interest me in things that interested you. Let our young friend hear and condemn me for the confession if he pleases, that I have too often irreverently laughed, or indecently yawned, when, as I now see, I might have drunk in not simply instruction, but solace and agreeable occupation for those hours which pass so dangerously, if not profitably employed.”

These last words were said in so low a tone that Hugh could not clearly distinguish them, but not a syllable—not an accent—not a tone was lost upon Mr. Rhys.

He gazed at her as if asking, as alone he could ask, with his eyes, what all this implied, and strange to say, his gaze was the first to falter.

He went first to one cabinet then to another, as if seeking his paper, but his wife saw he was struggling with the new hopes her words had conveyed.

Presently he came back stately, measured, composed as ever, and taking her hand as if to place her in a chair by his side, he pressed it for one moment tenderly, and felt that pressure responded to.

He felt half inclined to dismiss Cambria, the paper, and Hugh altogether, and use the blessed opportunity offered, for trying to come to an understanding with his wife, whom he felt to be dearer than ever ; but he controlled the impulse, while half afraid he should regret afterwards, the testing her new docility and patience too much.

“ Well, Hugh,” he said turning to him, as he took his own seat, which he turned away a little from his wife, as if not caring to risk the watching of her countenance as he read ; “ Well, Hugh, since Mrs. Rhys is so good as to indulge us in a bit of self-gratification, I suppose I must venture to read this sketch, I so imprudently, perhaps, mentioned ; not that I can hope it possesses the eloquence, the

profound research as regards materials, or the literary skill that disposes of them to the best advantage, that adorn and vivify a subject ; but simply in the hope that you, like another David, may find here and there among my facts and remarks, a pebble or two with which to hit that modern Goliath—Anglo-Saxondom."

He had seated Catherine in his own stately chair at the end of the table, and taken his place opposite to her, while Hugh sat on the dais step, his downcast eyes beaming with unbounded pleasure. It seemed like the days of bardic glory come round again, indeed, for him to be sitting there in the presence of the learned and proud master, and beautiful mistress of Dola' Hudol, and listening to a discourse on a topic of such inexhaustible interest to him.

The lad's simple enthusiasm, and the sweet attentiveness of Catherine's face, inspired the antiquary's calm grave features and voice with unusual energy as he read, dashing at once into his subject.

CHAPTER III.

“ ARE THE ENGLISH ANGLO-SAXONS ? ” — A
SKETCH, WHICH IMPATIENT READERS MAY
PASS BY, UNREAD.

THE cry of Anglo-Saxon as a distinctive mark of nationality, and Teutonic origin, is one that I verily believe no other people under the sun would raise under similar circumstances.

Suppose it for a moment strictly true, as applied to the greater part of England, what then ? Is it true as applied to Devon, and to Cornwall ; to the Manx islands, to the Channel islands, or to the Highlands of Scotland ? Is it true as applied to Wales ? Above all is it true as applied to Ireland, which alone *has had* a Celtic population of more than six millions ?

Reflect then, by the aid of these plain facts on the good taste, the good sense, the patriotism, the chivalry, the honest regard for truth of the predominant race in ignoring such immense numbers of their fellow citizens whenever the grandeur of the empire is in question, by the summing up all in the self-glorifying phrase, "Anglo-Saxon."

It is quite impossible to acquit English writers and politicians of a disregard for truth in their treatment of this subject. Facts in every direction stare them in the face, if they will but take note of them, and point to exactly opposite conclusions to those which they eternally parade, as if in full faith, before the world.

For example: If the European character of England as a military power, were to be traced back to the influences that most powerfully tended to its formation, we should all, I think, revert to that wonderful series of battles fought in France—that is to say, to Crécy, Poitiers and Agincourt, as the events that impressed indelibly upon the imaginations alike of the English and of continental nations, the idea of a prowess to

which thenceforward everything was humanly possible. Now mark !

Those very battles were in all probability, due as much to Celtic as to Anglo-Saxon valour. The connection between the earlier English Princes of Wales and the Welsh people, was marked by special tokens of royal trust and honour, and especially by the gathering of a large number of Welshmen under the Prince's own command, for the French expeditions. At Crécy, in the Black Prince's own division, there were, apart from the archers, who played the part allotted to sharp-shooters and skirmishers in modern battles, just one thousand Welshmen to eight hundred men at arms, presumably English, but who may have contained many persons from Ireland and other Celtic districts. These men at arms and Welshmen had the severe business of the hand to hand fighting to undertake, after the archers had created as much confusion as possible in the ranks of the enemy. To which body did the Prince give the precedence ? To the Welshmen ; who advancing under the flag of the Red Dragon of Wales, struck the blow that not only

"ARE THE ENGLISH ANGLO-SAXONS?" 39

disorganized the whole French array by the slaughter of so many of its leaders, but, it is said, offended even the king, Edward, inasmuch as that they did not preserve the richer men for ransom. The gallant Welshmen thought their business was to hit hard, and not trouble their heads about money-making. So much for Crécy.

Now for Poitiers. The Black Prince himself commanded there ; and it is certain the Welsh, as well as the Irish Kernes, were largely represented ; and the former being in his own favourite and tried division, we may be sure played their parts at least on an equality with the Anglo-Saxons.

As to Agincourt, less I believe is known as to the numbers present of the Welsh ; but the special brilliancy of their deeds and position is most suggestive. Henry the Fifth, who commanded in person, sent to reconnoitre the overwhelming masses of the confronting French. Probably, the choice he made was a superb piece of diplomacy, as between himself and his small army in so tremendous a conjuncture. That peculiar property of Anglo-Saxons, in their own estimate, phlegm,

did not it seems shine out in the moment of supreme danger from an English face, to the king, but from a Welshman's. It was his favourite Sir David Gam, who went, saw, and brought back the report, that, when re-echoed through the camp, was almost equivalent to a new division for the army. The enemy he said were enough to fight, enough to be killed, and enough to run away. Caesar's *veni, vidi, vici* was scarcely happier than this ; with the difference in his case of the ease of speaking epigrammatically after victory, and the difficulty of Gam's venturing to do so before.

But this is but the comedy-prologue to an awful tragedy. Eighteen French gentlemen banded together that day, in a solemn determination to kill or to capture the English monarch, or die in the attempt. They failed. The king was saved. How ? By the rampart which the devoted Gam and his officers made around him of their breasts. They saved him, but died in the process. Was there ever in all military history, a more touching incident than that of Henry coming to his dear brave-hearted Welshmen, after

the battle was won, and knighting them in their moments of death, as the only mode left him to show alike to them, and to the world, his heart-felt gratitude ?

And then Englishmen, of this day, *not of that*, go blowing a brazen trumpet about the world, in memory of the Anglo-Saxon deeds, that made England great.

It may be thought this is a mere exception in our military history, however brilliant. Judge ye. Is it or is it not a fact, that all or nearly all the great modern battles of England, whether fought in Flanders, in India, Egypt, Spain or Belgium, have been fought by armies in which the Celts of the empire predominated ? Why the Irish alone, I believe, even now form something like half the British army. Was I then unjust to use the word "honest" in connection with this cuckoo cry of Anglo-Saxon ?

The mention of the conquest of Agincourt, and of the Irish elements in the British army, remind me of other facts worthy our attention. After the death of King Henry, his widow married again ; and from the issue of that marriage sprang one of the greatest

of English sovereigns. And the mere name of her dynasty makes the author of it, Owen Tudor, a household word, wherever the English language is spoken. Was Queen Elizabeth Anglo-Saxon ?

The other instance to which I referred, is that of the greatest of modern military commanders—an absolutely perfect representative, I imagine, of Anglo-Saxons, in their own estimation—the Duke of Wellington ; who, born in Ireland, and related, by the maternal side, to the illustrious Welsh family of the Tudor-Trevors, is not much more Anglo-Saxon than Queen Elizabeth herself.

I see you smile, and no wonder. But this is a far more serious matter than at first sight it may appear. British statesmen seek unity. They are ever ready to put in operation the extremest powers of government to coerce differing national elements into unity. We refuse even to the death, the right of self-government, say for instance to Ireland, in the name of unity. Nothing in English opinion can be more criminal than for non-Anglo-Saxon elements to oppose unity. No punishment is too bad for the rebellious

spirits that will not lovingly kiss the hand of authority in unity. And while all these things are so, amid the ceaseless strifes and heart-burnings thus produced, there rises, alike for those who yield and for those who struggle, the same eternal songs of triumph for Anglo-Saxondom.

WHAT BECAME OF THE ABORIGINES ?

But are the English Anglo-Saxon after all?

I think not, and hope to show they may look to a much nobler ancestry.

Does it ever occur, I wonder, to the more thoughtful and cultivated men among them, to ask themselves as they read the spirit-stirring records of their very earliest history, what became of the aborigines?

Of course, I know, as they know, the babyish story, which even learned men have been content to accept as history, that the Britons were all killed off, or driven away into Wales, by the early Saxon invaders. I will deal with that presently. But there must have been other ideas and influences at work, to

strengthen and maintain such a conception of the origin of the English people through so long a period of time ; accompanied, as it was, by a reversal of the usual order of things ; for whereas we find in history generally, the memory and influence of great ideas or events gradually fading away, till at last they are little more than a recollection and a name ; here on the contrary, the original idea has gone on growing with the country's growth, till at last it has become one of the more conspicuous standing phenomena of the world.

What then have been these influences ? I think they may be thus enumerated :—

First, as regards the earlier state of things, there would be the hate felt by the successful invaders, for those they had so deeply injured, who had struggled with them so long and so well, and whose civilization they were unable to appreciate.

Then, as regards modern times, I note,—

—The notions about the very limited numbers of the aboriginal British population ;

—Their supposed barbarous character, which seemed to suggest how easily a more cul-

tivated race might displace them, and which made the English unwilling to think them their progenitors ;

—The very weighty fact of the language ; and lastly,—

—That peculiar trait of the Teutonic race, the belief in its descent from gods, no matter that they were pagan gods, which makes each man resent as a personal offence, every thing that opposes his god-like ideas and will ; and which, when he is in the position of absolute conqueror, commanding the lives, liberties, customs, education, marriages, etc., of a mixed race, may gradually through a favourable combination of circumstances extend through the whole ; leavening even the non-Teutonic blood with the pleasant titillating fancy of the whole of humanity ranged as in a circle before the Superior one's eyes, humbly bending like the sheaves of corn of Joseph's brethren, while his own particular sheaf stands erect in the centre, lord of all.

The British population then, according to the popular notion, was very limited. Indeed ! Julius Cæsar did not think so. If he, speaking from his own personal experience,

may be supposed to know anything about the matter, “the population” was “infinite, the houses very numerous.”

At a later period, (the time of Nero,) and after immense losses by fighting against the Romans, Tacitus speaking of Tributary British chiefs in council, says they were reminded that “if the Britons would but consider their own numbers, they would find that the Roman troops who were among them were but a paltry and inconsiderable force.”

But the fact of the long continuance of the wars between the first military power of the world, and this despised British population, before a final conquest was achieved, ought to have shown the absurdity and shamelessness of the theory. To conquer Britain became with the Romans the culminating point of national glory. For this triumphal honours were granted by applauding senates, imperial coins stamped. Think of a Roman Emperor changing his name, in order to call himself Britannicus, in memory of the Roman Conquests. Tacitus says of one of the decisive battles, in which the Britons under Boadicea were de-

feated, "the glory won on that day, was equal to that of the most renowned victories of the ancient Romans." We can easily understand that, when we hear of such an incident as a Roman Legion being almost annihilated by a single and sudden stroke, while on its way to reinforce its besieged countrymen; when we recal Severus' loss of fifty thousand men in a single campaign; or when we remember that the Roman conquest was not finally completed in less than a hundred and thirty years; though if the time of the last actual fighting be the limit, then more than two and a half centuries were required.

Judge then how curiously untrue is the notion of the aborigines being few or weak. Let me add two portentous facts. When the revolted Britons under Boadicea attacked London and St. Albans, which were occupied by the Romans, and Roman-British, and British in submission or alliance, they killed seventy thousand persons. And then when the Romans were able to retaliate effectively by a tremendous battle, victory and slaughter, they killed, according to Tacitus, some eighty thousand British men, women, and children, on

the field, or afterwards. And all these came from only two of the seventeen tribes by which South Britain was occupied. Let us finish this part of our theme by the mention of a pleasanter incident. It refers to the year 359, when the bloodshed between Roman and Briton had ceased ; when “arts” had again taken the place of “arms ;” when a prolonged peace reigned—never again to be broken by the same combatants ; and with as much of dignity for the dependent race as was compatible with military, political, and tributary submission. It was when the Roman colonies on the Rhine, having been pillaged by the barbarians, were left in imminent danger of starvation. Eight hundred vessels of unusual size were in consequence sent to Britain for corn, and brought back a most abundant supply. Such was the state of agriculture at that time among us ; such was the population on which the abundance depended.

But the Roman dominion ended by the Romans’ own act, through the general decay of their power. And then followed what no doubt every wise and patriotic Briton had mournfully foreseen, his country became a prey for

the hordes of robbers who were drawn to it by the knowledge of the unprotected state in which it had been left. For several generations the art of war must have died out among the Britons, unless we make an exception in favour of the many men of mixed blood, Roman-British, who must by this time have come into existence ; and who may have been trusted with arms and trained as Roman soldiers, without being, like other British recruits, sent abroad.

The Picts were the first—and the most unnatural of these invaders—for in all probability they were of Celtic blood.

To save themselves from this influx of barbarians, who could have had no motive but the superior wealth, and, therefore, superior civilization in many respects of the Britons, the latter, it is supposed, appealed to the Saxons for aid ; who came—drove off the Picts—and then turned upon the unhappy Britons treacherously ; and after another frightful period of anarchy and war, which lasted some hundred and fifty years, were "exterminated and driven into Wales."

The simplicity, neatness, and completeness

of this theory is certainly charming, if only it is true.

But why is Wales made a receptacle for destitute Britons? She had her own and powerful tribes, her own interests, her own land to care for and guard. No doubt she might in cases of necessity receive a limited number of refugees, whose characters as warriors, or whose local position on the borders, when flying as houseless wanderers from the vengeful Saxon sword, might give them a claim to the hospitality of the Kymri (a distinct branch, remember, of the Celts), who possessed Wales. But anything like a wholesale reception of such fugitives would have been simply suicidal. They must all, guests and hosts alike, have perished by famine; to say nothing of the endless additional complications of absurdity into which we are plunged by the hypothesis.

No great numbers then of the Britons of England could possibly have been received in Wales, or existed there if received. Nay, we may even ask, how could they ever have got there?

If the Anglo-Saxons were in such absolute

mastery as to achieve the result spoken of, they must also have been able to stop the wandering masses of Britons, who might attempt to march through or across the country ; and therefore slaughter them at once, rather than risk the most dangerous of all results—their junction with men of their own blood in or near Wales, who were still free.

The alternative then, is that the Anglo-Saxons killed them off—which makes the theory probably neater, more finished than before—but also not a little startling.

What, kill all those warriors, of all those tribes, within a very limited space of time, who had previously made alike Roman and Saxon measure their rate of progress towards conquest, by centuries rather than by years ? The idea is a bold one, and takes one's breath away ! But let us accept it and go on.

The warriors gone at one fell swoop, what about the labouring population, scattered over every part of the interior of the country, and without whom warriors and war would alike soon have come to an end ? How were they to be got at even to be killed ? Did the Anglo-Saxons send a depu-

tation of a couple or half dozen armed men to every township, village, and hamlet, of the whole of England, that they might there call the rustic Britons together, as the memorable mistress called her ducks, “ Dilly, dilly, come and be killed ?” Or did they, less confidently, send armies to march through the whole length and breadth of the land to perform the job, having previously sent a polite request that the natives would be kind enough to stay at home till they came ?

But I am inclined to be generous and allow the *possibility* as a bare theory, that the whole labouring population might have been killed off, but I am arrested by a little difficulty in going further. Did the Anglo-Saxons not want corn, or pork, or beef ? Or did they object on principle to make other men labour for them ? Or were they so enamoured of industry, after a long and successful career of pillage and slaughter, that they *preferred* not to be lords—not to be masters—but do everything, down even to the humblest offices, for themselves ? Certainly that would be a revelation of Anglo-Saxondom for which the world is hardly prepared.

But it is in argument as in love ; once begin to yield to your antagonist, and you must go on. So, I give up the whole labouring population to indiscriminate slaughter, as well as the warriors.

But what about the women ? Did the Anglo-Saxons not want *them* ? Or is it supposed that one, two, or three hundred thousand virgins were fetched from the wilds of Germany ?

And if so, how did they come ? In those fleets of "three" and "five" ships, of which we hear so much ? Or did each batch, in first coming, bring with it, stowed away below as ballast, a reasonable proportion of sweethearts, wives, sisters, and daughters to profit by the change of country, when their lords and masters should have taken undisputed possession, in periods of time varying probably from a few to more than a hundred and fifty years ?

And even if the ascetic, spiritual-minded Anglo-Saxons foreswore the charms of British women, and with heroic self-sacrifice killed them all, what about the children ?

Suppose only those children left alive who were under twelve years of age, how many

would there be ? Look back at the series of facts I have detailed, and judge whether it is humanly possible that they could have been—roughly speaking—less in number than the whole of the Anglo-Saxon invaders, excluding of course those who had been born on the soil ; who would assuredly be Celtic on the mother's side, and whose true designation was, what all Englishmen's ought to have been, Anglo-Celt.

Of course having admitted so much as I have done, I may be now asked to admit finally the wholesale slaughter of even the innocent young children. And if the idea can be accepted and looked at even for a single moment as true, what an infamous set of barbarians must the ancestors of the English people have been ! And yet Englishmen are to call themselves Anglo-Saxons ! To glorify themselves as Anglo-Saxons ! Why they should rather have a day set apart of solemn humiliation, renunciation, expiation, and pledge ; a kind of political baptism to wash them clean, and put an impassable barrier between those Teutons and these.

But again, I say the English, with that

charming modesty that so becomes them, mistake themselves ; neither they in their notions of the past, nor their presumed ancestry in their actual deeds, are so bad as they seem.

The whole basis of this incredible story rests upon one man—Gildas—to whom may be applied the eastern fable of the tortoise that supports the world, and the question the fable provoked, what supports him ? Nothing.

He is supposed to have written his book in the year 550—560, to have been a monk, and to have obtained his materials not from Britain itself, nor from original British documents, but from the continent, probably from British refugees devoted, like himself, to Roman ideas and interests. But the value to be attached to his writings may be judged by two facts : one, that where independent and more trustworthy evidence can be placed by the side of his, it is generally to contradict him ; the other that Mr. Stevenson, in his preface to a recent edition of Gildas, says :

" We are unable to speak with certainty as to his (Gildas's) parentage, his country, or even his name, the period when he lived, or the works of which he was the author !" In

other words we really *know* nothing about him.

But the most amusing part of the business is that even this half-mythical personage does not say what it is always supposed he did say, but rather the very reverse. Here is the passage that has been made such wonderful use of, and which I transcribe from Dr. Giles' translation in his "Six old English Chronicles :"

"*Some* therefore of the miserable remnant being taken in the mountains, were murdered in great numbers; others constrained by famine, came and yielded themselves to be slaves *for ever to their foes*, running the risk of being instantly slain, which truly was the greatest favour that could be offered them; some others passed beyond the seas with loud lamentations, instead of the voice of exhortation,—'Thou hast given us as sheep to be slaughtered, and among the Gentiles hast thou dispersed us.'

"Others committing the safeguard of their lives, which were in continual jeopardy, to the mountains, precipices, thickly wooded

forests, and to the rocks of the seas (albeit with trembling hearts) *remained still in their country.*"

So that instead of saying the Britons were all killed, Gildas really says some went abroad (who must have been very few), some were killed, some made slaves, and some driven for shelter to the forests, mountains, etc., who thus, as he points out, remained still in the country. Exactly! Just what one might have anticipated beforehand.

Strange to say, looked at in this simple natural light, Gildas' story becomes not only probable, but is beyond question substantially true. He says nothing whatever to contradict the idea that the great mass of the British remained alive and under Saxon rule. Large numbers may have been killed, but the interesting question for us is as to how many remained alive, and in what state. And that question may be briefly and summarily answered, from the Saxon Chronicle.

Eleven years after the dates mentioned for his book (550—560) Saxons and Britons fought at Bedford ; and Aylesbury, and other

towns were *then taken from the Britons*. Six years after that Gloucester, Cirencester, and Bath were *found in the hands of the Britons*, and three British kings slain in dispossessing them. And yet again, seven years later, we find it recorded that *many towns were taken from the Britons*. And now for the crowning fact :—617. This year Ethelfrid, king of the Northumbrians, was slain by Redwald, king of E. Angles, and Edwin, the son of Alba, succeeded to the kingdom, *and then subdued all Britain—THE KENTISH MEN ALONE EXCEPTED*.

It is most important here to note that where the invaders first landed there they first always strove to make for themselves strongholds or places of safety ; and from these marched into the interior of the country, often only to be driven back.

All their tactics must have been framed with a view to the permanent retention of the strong places on the coast ; consequently the British strength must have been in the interior. And the known historical facts confirm this. Caractacus in his ever memorable speech, speaks of his nation as the most renowned one of Britain, dwelling in the very

heart of the country, and out of sight of the shores of the conquered, so that their eyes were unpolluted by the contagion of slavery. Cæsar, distinguishing between the maritime people (formerly invaders from Belgium), refers to the interior as peopled by the natives ; and the latest of the battles between Britons and Anglo-Saxons were, as we have seen, in the interior.

Really one is ashamed to reflect how clear, after all, is the matter, if looked at without prejudice, in the light of common sense.

Here is a people consisting of many distinct tribes or nations (Kent alone had four kings) overpowered, not at once, but by successive and very slow steps, and with alternations of fortune and of feelings on both sides. Now one grows weary of the strife, now the other. Thus spring up the two parallel ideas—hateful at first, but gradually growing irresistible—first, of the native yielding to the foreign force that presses so heavily, and seems capable of endless reinforcement ; and secondly of the conquerors accepting submission without making it too humiliating and hopeless for the conquered. And this state of view as regards the more independent-minded of the

Britons would be constantly forced upon their unwilling thoughts, by the sight of so many of their countrymen in different parts of England already enslaved through the superiority of the Saxon strength in those particular localities.

A still more potent element would be the amalgamation of the races through the marriages of Saxon men with British women—forced probably at first. And it is easy to see how large a number of such women there would be after the terrible slaughter of the British warriors in the latter years of British independence.

Here I think is the key-note of the whole. The Saxons could have—as a general rule—no women but those they obtained from among the Britons ; and when once that process had gone on for a few years on a scale of considerable magnitude, as in the nature of things it must have done, the very heart of resistance was plucked out ; the two enemies were fast becoming friends by the law of inexorable necessity.

Two or three facts will confirm, I think, the truth of this my theory. Bede shows us

that in 603, Ethelfrid gave the Britons the alternative of becoming tributary, or being driven out. If one of the worst of the ravening “wolves,” as he was called, found it necessary to offer such terms as these, after the period when it is supposed the Britons had altogether disappeared from the land of their birth, we may judge how less ruthless spirits would deal with them. And here is a striking commentary :—Cædwalla, a British Prince, actually reigned over one of the newly formed Saxon kingdoms, Wessex, A.D. 634. How can that fact be explained, except on some such hypothesis as I have suggested ?

It was a compromise, I conclude, between the politically powerful but less numerous Saxons with the less powerful but more numerous Britons ; the latter accepting the Saxon arrangements, in return for the personal respect shown to their race ; the former yielding the post of sovereign for the certainty that all further opposition within the new kingdom would cease. I shall leave this part of my subject with one later glimpse of Saxon and Briton together in amity. At Exeter, in 940, there was a British part of

the city and a Saxon part, the two having equal privileges.

You will be prepared now to receive, I hope, as it deserves, a few words from our Welsh Triads, which really, in many senses, are historical documents of the utmost value,—

“*The Lleogrians [i.e. the people inhabiting what we now call England] became as Saxons.*”

To the suggestive simplicity and straightforwardness of those words, written probably in the same century as Gildas wrote in, one can add nothing.

But the poet Taliesin, living in that same sixth century, has also left his record. He says ; (I quote from Mr. Borrow's *Wild Wales*)

“A serpent which coils,
And with fury boils,
From Germany coming with armed wings spread,
Shall subdue and enthrall
The broad Britain all,
From the Lochlin ocean to Severn's bed.

“*And British men
Shall be captives then,
To strangers from Saxon's strand ;
They shall praise their God, and hold
Their language as of old,
But except wild Wales they shall lose their land.*”

I cannot agree with my countryman Mr. Stephens, author of that very excellent work, "The Literature of the Kymri," who appears to include this prediction among the poems wrongly assigned to Taliesin, and to consider that it was made long *after* the Britons had been enslaved ; and for the rather obvious reason, that as the Britons have *not* kept their language any more than they have kept their land, (except in Wild Wales) the prediction shows on the face of it, that it was written when the ruin of the British power was impending but not consummated ; and hence was liable to the fate of all human prophecies—mistake.

Partly then through actual amalgamation, and the amity produced by intermarriage ; partly through political compromises and alliances in moments of Saxon need ; but chiefly through reduction to slavery, did the ancient British population become merged into the new England ; and in numbers, that according to all probability, must have greatly exceeded the numbers of the invaders. And thus we find Taliesin's prediction of what should be, in harmony with Mr. Hallam's view

of what was ; when the historian refers to the great proportion of the serf population of England as consisting of Britons.

But how, it may be asked, came the ancient Celtic language to be so completely obliterated in favour of the Teutonic ?

The ceaseless spirit of exaggeration that affects the Anglo-Saxon advocates has misrepresented this, like every other part of the subject. The ordinary notion has been that the language is throughout Teutonic, alike in the vocabulary and the structure. Both positions are now denied ; and as to the first I shall merely point to the opinion of Mr. Max Muller, that not one third of the words in English dictionaries can be traced to a Teutonic source.

Still the language is the one specious argument that Anglo-Saxondom can urge in favour of the idea, that the English are Anglo-Saxons. How specious it is, is seen the moment we cast our eyes across the channel, to the descendants of the Gauls, who were the very same people as our own Britons, who now also speak the language of conquerors, not their own.

All the causes I have enumerated for the absorption of Britons and Saxons into one race of Englishmen, but under the dominating influence of the latter, acted with equal effect in producing one language, and that the English, under the despotism of the conquerors.

They of course dreaded the tongues of the oppressed, for they might at any time bring about a new alliance of the Tribes, a new struggle, a new conquest, if not even a reversal of the conquest by defeat.

The British poets, and the poets of Wales, who came by degrees to represent the former, (helped, no doubt, by many of the choicer spirits who fled to them for hospitality), were at the time full of predictions of the restoration of British, and the destruction of Saxon power ; as you will find in Mr. Stephens' book.

The native language therefore was put down : not in one year, nor ten, nor perhaps in a century, but still put down.

And the process may not have been as barbarous as at first sight one might fancy, nor so difficult. It was only to see that the children were all made to learn Anglo-Saxon.

And how could they help but learn, when their own fathers in a vast number of cases were the teachers ? The amalgamation of the Saxon men with the British women clears away every difficulty.

But is it not a pitiable spectacle to see a knot of learned men eternally squabbling about race and language, as if the mightiest interests of humanity were bound up in proving some impassable barrier between these men and those ; while all the while, they themselves show us that Celt and Teuton in blood and language, alike draw the line of descent from one common stock or parent, the Indo-European ?

Well does Sir F. Palgrave remark :— “ Britons, Anglo-Saxons, Danes, and Normans were all relations, however hostile. They were all kinsmen shedding kindred blood.”

Is there yet need of further demonstration ? If so, glance at the faces of Englishmen wherever you meet them, and ask what story they tell. Do fair complexions, blue eyes, broad faces, flaxen hair—such as we have been told to look on as characteristic of the

Saxon race—predominate? Or as Mr. Pike puts the matter in his valuable and interesting book, "The English and their Origin,"* which goes deeply into this part of the subject, (and putting aside in fairness what may be merely the exaggeration of a truth,) do men of darker complexions and hair, oval faces, and long heads, predominate or no over men of less dark complexions, broader faces, and shorter heads? It is impossible for there to be any doubt as to the answer: the former greatly predominate. And yet the types thus summarized are precisely the accepted types of Briton and Saxon.

But I do not agree with Mr. Pike, as to an actual predominating Celtic influence in English society looked at in its broadest

* The author wishes to mention in connection with this work, and one on a similar subject by Dr. Nicholas, that his own views as conveyed in the text were formed long before he had seen either of these books. It was during a protracted residence in Wales for the purpose of this novel, he first began to ask himself the question and to obtain the answers, he has put into the mouth of another. This refers simply to the general theory of the above sketch. Its tone and peculiarities must be considered in connection with the fact, that it is a Welshman who is the speaker.

aspect ; and for this, to me all-sufficing reason,—if there was ever a nation of “imagination all compact,” it was that of my countrymen before the destruction of their independence by England ; and what they were, the Britons previously had been in all essential qualities ; while on the other hand, there never was a nation, perhaps, in which imagination was so deficient as in the Anglo-Saxons of the middle ages, and as at present in the bulk of Englishmen.

I do not doubt that there are stupid Celts and brilliantly endowed Teutons among us ; but no fair observer can question the statement that the predominant *character* among the English is Teutonic, and the predominant *population* Celtic—the rural elements of the latter constituting probably the largest proportion of the whole—having suffered to a ruinous extent by the original slavery of their condition, then by serfdom, and lastly by their modern state, as agricultural labourers, earning too little to nourish either body or mind properly.

But with the Celtic town population it has been different. They might there be

inferior in numbers to the Anglo-Saxons, and hence have been beaten in the race for material things, but they have also been the winners probably in those greater achievements, which give glory to the nation. Chaucer, and Spenser, and Shakespeare, and Milton, have little or nothing in common, so far as their genius is concerned, with the unimaginative masses of the English (rich or poor,) of our time, but they have everything in common with the bards and Romantic heroes of early Welsh and British history. At all events I please myself by thinking that we have the greater right to them—while we resign to our old antagonists the material conquests of industry—and the past influence over legislation.

BRITON OR SAXON, WHICH NOW SHOULD BE
OUR EXEMPLAR?

Can there be a doubt? asks some impatient Anglo-Saxon, contemptuously thinking only of painted Britons on the one side, perhaps, and of a King Alfred on the other.

What will he say then to my assertion that the Saxon invaders were mere pagan barbarians?

and that they came to attack, stifle or destroy, a civilization and a religion too high for them even to understand ?

The Englishman admires antiquity, yet takes care to stop short before an antiquity to which his antiquity is but a thing of yesterday. As Bishop Percy, long ago, told the English, the hills, forests, rivers, of their country retain to this hour the names that British forefathers gave them, and, perhaps, innumerable centuries ago. Everything of the grandest antiquity we possess is Celtic.

So again of the British laws and customs, however difficult it may be to trace step by step the links, and show what remains. Sir John Fortescue in his *De Laudibus Legum Angliae*, writing so late as the fifteenth century, and referring to the excellence and duration of those in his own time, enumerates the conquerors who came to rule over the country, Romans, Saxons, Danes, Saxons again, and Normans, then says, "if these ancient British customs had not been *most excellent*, reason, justice, and the love of their country, would have induced some of these kings to change or abolish them, especially the Romans, who

ruled all the rest of the world by the Roman laws." So spake one of the very highest English legal authorities of British laws and customs, not from his reading or theories, but from his own actual living experience.

Is it in individual heroism that the Saxon surpassed the Briton? Excuse the smile with which I ask. I suppose if the world's suffrages could be collected, there would be but one opinion, that a grander specimen of heroic humanity never glorified our planet than Caractacus. And the British woman was only less grandly represented in Boadicea. Here are two figures who are yet to the imaginations of men living, actual beings, never to be forgotten.

Or do we wish for yet another variety of hero? Take him then in Arthur, the representative alike of the actual and the ideal—here each personified in the most glowing and enchanting of all antique individualities. Do you know that while his deeds rank him as among the greatest of patriotic kings and warriors—a man who side by side with Alfred would make even that most noble, most magnificent monarch shrink in the comparison—*were those deeds only as well known as the*

Saxon's—Do you know, I ask, that the mere light and glory shed from his life have sufficed to fill Europe from that time to this, not vaguely and egotistically, but genetically with the most precious fruits of our literature? From the Arthur legends sprang the romantic poetry and fiction of modern Europe. At this moment England's greatest living poet finds his grandest opportunities in the dealing with the British King Arthur.

Yet even these things seem to me for the moment trifles when I contemplate another feature of that early time, and the fratricidal contest of the two races. One can hardly believe one's senses when we read English history, to see how the introduction and reception of Christianity to this land appears to be thought the merit of Anglo-Saxons. Why the barbarians found the religion of Christ flourishing among us, and destroyed it for us so far as they could. Tertullian, about the close of the second century, boasts that the Gospel had subdued the very tribes of Britain *that were still unconquered by the Romans*. Was there ever a more magnificent compliment paid to the courage, the intellect, and

the divine instincts of a nation ? Why the church in Britain was in full organization by the end of the second century, and sent bishops and others to represent it at the great councils held on the continent, as for instance at Arles in 314. And then those delicious Anglo-Saxons, after having choked everything like religion out of the hearts of the people, re-discovered it ; and other would-be Anglo-Saxons, centuries after, boast of the grandeur of the exploit !

Before I try to illustrate the culture of the "painted barbarians" at the time of the Saxon invasion, let me show the Saxon culture by one pregnant fact. Even in Alfred's time there was no Anglo-Saxon literature—all the treasures of the past remained to be translated into the Anglo-Saxon tongue, and he himself laboured to begin the work.

How, on the contrary, was it centuries earlier with the Britons ? I will not dwell vaguely on the knowledge of the Druidic times, great as that certainly was, but refer you simply to existing evidences.

There are specimens of the intellect and philosophy of the Britons, Triads, so called,

which are among the oldest things preserved in Welsh literature, and which date probably from the very time of the Druids. Take the subject genius, and compare for instance with Wordsworth's view of the poet's genius in the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads :

The three foundations of genius :—the gift of God, man's exertion, and the events of life.

The three primary requisites :—an eye that can see nature, a heart that can feel nature, and boldness that dares follow nature.

The three supports :—strong mental endowment, memory, learning. And again :—prosperity, social acquaintance, and praise.

I may deceive myself, but it seems to me that here is an absolutely perfect analysis of the subtlest thing in the world, not only in its diviner spiritual aspect, but also in its worldly aspect, so that to-day, as so many centuries ago, it remains absolutely true, and you can neither add to it, nor take away.

Consider again these themes from the Triads, godliness and social duty, so finely melting into each other :—

The three characteristics of godliness :—
to do justice, to love mercy, and to behave
humbly.

There are three actions which are divine :—
to succour the poor and feeble, to benefit an
enemy, and courageously to suffer in the
cause of right.

One more triad and I have done. It is a
glimpse of the ancient Briton's speculative
philosophy :—

The three priorities of being—which are
the three necessities of Deity :—Power,
Knowledge, and Love. And from these
three are strength and existence.

Hugh, don't forget to ask your new Anglo-Saxon friends to put by the side of these things whatever they think may best stand the comparison in connection with their cherished exemplars of the sixth and seventh centuries, and tell me the result.

But our forefathers acted out what they thought ; whereas the Saxon nature seems almost to fear thinking, lest it might be tempted

to act. Look at the treatment of the artisan as shown to us by his treatment in Wales in the very earliest periods. He could travel where he pleased, and enter what houses he pleased, sure of hospitality. The Mabinogion presents to us a knight knocking at the gate of a castle, and being told the knife is in the meat, and the drink is in the horn, and there is revelry in the hall of Gwyrnach the Giant ; and except for a craftsman bringing his craft, the gate will not be opened to-night.

Even in trade the Britons preceded and taught their conquerors. Himilco, the Carthaginian navigator, described them long before the Roman invasion as a numerous race, endowed with spirit, with no little expertness, *all busy with the cares of trade.*

Herodotus and Aratus also speak of their export of metals to the East.

Could you not fancy it would be a most interesting thing to be able to look into the home of one of the early Britons ? Well, you may do so. You may judge of the domestic state and culture of the Britons in the sixth and seventh centuries, by the anecdote quoted above, and by that which Giraldus Cambrensis

found in the year 1204 in Wales ; which could have had no external lights or influences of any kind in the interim, to change the substantial character of its civilization. It may have improved or deteriorated, but not fundamentally changed. Consider then this charming picture, and especially its bearing upon the condition of women, and then think of the wreck that was made when these things were destroyed in England :—

"The strangers who arrive in the morning, are entertained until evening with the conversation of young women, and with the music of the harp ; for in this country (Wales), almost every house is provided with both... In the evening, when no more guests are expected, the meal is prepared according to the number and dignity of the persons assembled, and according to the wealth of the family which entertains. The kitchen does not supply many dishes, nor high-seasoned incitements to eating. The house is not furnished with table-cloths or napkins ; they study nature more than splendour ; for which reason the guests being seated in threes, in

stead of couples, as elsewhere, they place the dishes before them all at once, upon rushes and fresh grass, in large platters or trenchers. They also make use of a thin and broad cake of bread, baked every day ; and they sometimes add chopped meat, with broth. Such a repast was formerly used by the noble youths from which this nation boasts its descent, and whose manners it still partly imitates. While the family is engaged in waiting on the guests, the host and hostess stand up ; paying unremitting attention to everything ; and take no food till all the company are satisfied.”

Music is the only thing, alas, in which we now seem able to indicate our former quality.—Pray listen, Hugh, for this should be very interesting to you—The same authority says :

“ By the sweetness of their musical instruments they soothe and delight the ear ; they are rapid yet delicate in their modulation ; and by the astonishing execution of their fingers, and their swift transitions from discord to concord, produce the most pleasing harmony.

"And again: It is remarkable that in all their haste of performance, they never forget time and musical proportion, and such is their art that with all their inflection of tones, the variety of their instruments, and that intricacy of their harmony, they attain perfection of consonance and melody, by a sweet velocity, an equable disparity, and a discordant concord . . .

"They enter into a movement, and conclude in so delicate a manner, and play the little notes so sportively under the blunter sounds of the bass strings, enlivening with a wanton levity, or communicating a deeper internal sensation of pleasure, that the perfection of their art appears in the concealment of it: for—

"Art profits when concealed,
Disgraces when revealed.

"It is asserted," adds Mr. Stephens, "that the Welsh were acquainted with counterpoint, prior to Guido's supposed discovery of it, as one of the twenty-four ancient games, in which Welshmen were ambitious to excel,

was to sing a song in four parts with accentuations."

The position of the Bard-musician among such a people, must indeed have been enviable. His order was erected into a hierarchy. Going back so far as the tenth century we find his position as supreme bard was next but one to the patron [*i.e.*, the chief, prince, or king] of the family. His land was free, a horse from the king was in attendance for him. When the office was first secured to him he had a harp from the king, and a gold ring from the queen. Hugh, lad, does not thy soul expand at the thought of the things such bards did? Imagine thyself in the position provided for the bard, when he was ordered to sing the Monarchy of Britain in front of the battle!

Before I draw to a close I must remember that I have said nothing of the chiefest glory of those olden days. Yes, you understand me—the poetry which we have still in possession, linking the Britons of the most ancient days, with my own countrymen the Welsh, down to a period before the advent of England's morning star in Chaucer.

The wealth at my disposal embarrasses me. But at the very same period English poetry—the poetry of the Anglo-Saxons—had literally no existence. Uncouth thoughts, in still more uncouth rhymes, crop up every now and then ; but from the sixth to the fourteenth century when Chaucer wrote, there is scarcely a gleam of anything that even looked like fancy, imagination—in a word—poetry.

Now for the contrast. What shall I give you first ? A Bacchanalian hymn ; not, however, in honour of the juice of the grape, but of that from honey ; of which, by-the-bye, the Anglo-Celtic queen, Elizabeth, was very fond.

Listen to an extract from the mead song of a very early time :—

THE MEAD SONG.

"To him who rules supreme ; our Sovereign Lord,
Creation's chief—by all that lives adored,
Who made the waters and sustained the skies,
Who gives and prospers all that's good and wise ;
To him I'll pray that Maelgwyn ne'er may need
Exhaustless stores of sparkling nectrous mead ;
Such as with mirth our hour has often crown'd,
When from his horns the foaming draught went round.
The bee whose toils produced it, never sips
The juice ordained by Heaven for human lips,

Delicious mead, man's solace and his pride ;
Who finds in thee his every want supplied."*

Can you believe that such a poem was written in Wales a century or two before Chaucer was born? yet that is the latest period assigned to the poem. But here I am again at issue with Mr. Stephens, who thus dates the poem, in direct contradiction to the popular tradition and belief, and to the very name attached to it, Taliesin. If it was his, it was written by a Briton in the sixth century, *i.e.*, the very period of the struggle of the Britons against the Saxons. And why does Mr. Stephens doubt its antiquity? Simply because the language (in the Welsh) is so smooth, pure, and lucid. But he forgets that the original poem may easily have undergone slight verbal transformation as the language became modernized, without any vital change whatever in the essential character of the original. Meantime the poem testifies beyond all question to my mind, that it belongs to the earlier date, and to the supposed author. Note this :—

"To him I'll pray that Maelgwyn ne'er may need," etc.

* Stephens.

Who was Maelgwyn? Why a celebrated king of the Britons, contemporary with Taliesin, and his personal friend and patron.

So much for the Mead Song. Now take a specimen from what I may almost call a splendid dramatic poem of the twelfth century, the *Hirlas*. The prince poet who wrote it, imagines himself presiding over a banquet with his warriors, on the eve of a day of battle. "Fill cup-bearers!" he exclaims at the beginning of every verse; and then taking his chiefs in succession, he reviews their deeds, managing with admirable skill to vary the praise bestowed on each. In the list he comes in turn to Tudyr and Moreiddig.

"Fill cup-bearer as you would avoid death,
Fill the horn of honour at our banquets,
The long blue horn of high privilege; of ancient silver
That covers it not sparingly;
Bears to Tudyr, eagle of slaughter,
A prime beverage of florid wine.
Thy head shall be the forfeit if there come not in
The most delicious mead."

The cup-bearer goes, as the poet-prince supposes, with the mead to the heroes he

names, in whose praise the song again rises—

“To the hand of Moreiddig, encourager of songs.
 May they become old in fame before they leave us.
 Ye blameless brothers of aspiring souls,
 Of dauntless ardour that would grasp ev'n fire,
 Heroes, what services ye have achieved for me !
 Not old disgustingly, but old in skill ;
 Unwearied, rushing wolves of battle ;
 First in the crimsoned ranks of bleeding pikes ;
 Brave leaders of the Mochnatiens from Powys,
 The prompt red chiefs to use their arms,
 And keep their boundaries free from turmoil ;—
 Praise is your meed most amiable pair !”

He now turns to greet them, but their places are vacant ; he recollects they fell in the morning conflict ; he hears their dying groans—his triumphant exultations cease—his hilarity flies—and the broken tones of mournful exclamations suddenly burst out—

“Ha—the cry of death ! and do I miss them ?
 O Christ ! how I mourn their catastrophe !
 O lost Moreiddig—how greatly shall I need thee.”*

I can add to this only two pieces more, extracts from love poems, a class of which I

* Stephens.

could find a hundred other examples, in the poetry of Wales, before the Anglo-Saxons of England had obtained a single poet.

The first is a literal translation by Mr. Stephens, from Rhys Goch, who died in 1340. Of course the charm—the aroma of the original verse is not to be hoped for in such a guise. But take it as it is—

“ Above us streamed the rays of the summer sun,
And long green grass covered the fields,
Trefoils in great numbers and leafy trees adorned the
scene ;
There lay I and Gwen in perfect bliss,
Reclining both among the flowers,
Surrounded by troops of trefoils ;
Lip to lip we spent the time.
From the lips of the maid I obtained a feast,
Like that of saintly David in the choir of Hodnant,
Or Taliesin at the court of Elphin,
Or the Round Table feasts at Caerleon,
Or angel joys in paradise.
And we both feasted thus
Without a care for what had been,
Without a thought of what would be ;
This height of bliss was never ending,
For we were both of one intent,
And all that day we only sang
That we would live and love together ;
Living sweetly upon kisses,
And both dying on the same.”

The second is a love song by Howell, Prince of N. Wales, who died in 1172, and who has written other exquisite things—

“ Give me the fair, the gentle maid
 Of slender form in mantle green ;
 Whose woman’s wit is ever staid,
 Subdued by virtue’s graceful mien.
 Give me the maid whose heart with mine
 Shall blend each thought, each hope combine
 Then, maiden, fair as ocean’s spray,
 Gifted with Kymric wit’s bright ray,
 Say, am I thine ?
 Art thou then mine ?
 What ? silent now ?
 Thy silence makes this bosom glow.
 I choose thee, maiden, for thy gifts divine,
 ‘Tis right to choose ; then, fairest, choose me thine.”*

Judge now of the true characters respectively of Britons and Anglo-Saxons, and of our debt to each in blood and culture.

Judge also whether, as I said at the onset, the time has or has not come to put off the false and put on the true designation. To banish the word Saxon—the most hated word to be found, perhaps, in any language—so far as it concerned Britons, Welsh, Scots, and

* Stephens.

Irish, in past times, and by the Irish people even now. Banish it for ever, with all its blood-thirsty and egotistical associations. O banish it! Be content to take precedence with your own favorite word—that which gives name to England—and then instead of a kind of repetition of your own notion of your own exceeding excellence, substitute a word that may allow your fellow citizens to have also a position, a share, a satisfaction, in whatever affects the happiness, the honour, or the welfare of the whole empire. Let us have no more Anglo-Saxon—but let Anglo-Celt henceforward be the national watchword.

In conclusion, let us not forget that in the scheme of God, we may be very sure that all qualities are interchangeable between all races. Perhaps, because they all came from one; or if not that, then because they are yet to become one; one people, one language, one government, but comprising in that sublime trinity in unity, endless diversities of people, tongues, and governments; with a wealth of all kinds, mental and material, inconceivably beyond aught we at present know, but without that incessant war of interests and

bigotries which at present makes the whole world but groan like "a creation in travail;" and renders even the wealth we do possess, valueless in the eyes of a Christian philosopher, except as materials for the future to which the spirit of progress must lead us on; that progress itself being but the law which is evolved from the interchanges of which I have spoken.

CHAPTER IV.

HUGH MAKES MISCHIEF.

HOWEVER weary older and wiser persons might have grown, during the reading of this paper, it is certain they had sufficient interest for the antiquarian's young listeners to hold their attention throughout.

While Hugh sat in open-mouthed astonishment at some of the facts he had just heard, Mrs. Rhys said, almost gaily—

“ Well, Owen, you have made one convert at all events—Hugh Morgan, be your witness *I am henceforward Anglo Celt.*”

Mr. Rhys was happier than he had been for many long months. During the last hour all the threatening storm seemed passing from above him, leaving serene beauty and sunshine.

Hugh, to whom he felt he partly owed the

pleasant opportunity by which he had gained, for the first time, his wife's earnest attention and clear appreciation, was soon to feel the effects of his patron's altered mood.

As he received his parting shake of the hand he found a piece of paper left in his own.

Hugh coloured deeply as he opened it and saw that it was a ten-pound note.

"Oh, sir," he said, bluntly, "would it seem very ungrateful to ask another favour instead of this?"

"Not to ask another favour, Hugh, certainly, but why in place of this?"

"He is discontented," he thought; "of course, because I've done so much for him, he thinks I ought to do more. Celt or Saxon, they're all alike for gratitude."

But he was wrong; for Hugh was grateful to him, and never thought there was any bitter inconsistency in his patron's kindness for teaching him, first, that the whole charm and essence of life lay in the love and cultivation of noble and beautiful things—patriotism, chivalrous sentiment, music, poetry, art—and awakening in his soul a passion for such

things that could only pass away with his life, and then letting him go to spend the best years of his youth on an office stool for fifteen shillings a week.

"I could not ask it, sir, unless you let it be in place of this, that is, if you *can* grant it." And Hugh coloured again, and pushed the note further on the table.

"Well, I suppose I must promise—out with it, then, Hugh; you have given me much of your time and labour, and must remember it's only due to me to let me know how I can best assist you."

"Would you mind, then, sir—I am afraid it's asking a great deal—but would you mind not sending for the rent for some months longer, till Elias has recovered a little from his heavy losses? He is driven so terribly close, sir, I don't know how he will get through it."

"My dear boy, rely upon my attending to this, and—" Mr. Rhys answered, but before he finished his sentence Catherine's generosity took fire, and she went to Hugh, and pressing her purse into his hand, said—

"I shall go up there and see them, Hugh,

and do what I can for them—your pretty sister, Hirell—”

“Not my sister,” interposed Hugh, with a smile, “but just the same.”

“Yes—I forgot—well, I have never seen her, but I intend to do so; I heard from my maid that she has not been well since this dreadful disappointment you have all suffered—now why shouldn’t she come here for two or three days, I’m sure it would do her good.”

“It will give her such pleasure to hear you have wished her to come,” answered Hugh, “but she’s quite well, and I doubt if they could possibly spare her. Hirell’s one that makes the very life of the house—no, I’m sure she couldn’t be persuaded to leave Elias for a single day, just now, and as to any more help—” continued Hugh, growing rather frightened at the thoughts of the reception any charitable visitor might meet with at Bod Elian, “as to any more help—it is not at all—at all—” He would have said “needed,” but was too truthful, so stammered and broke off, blurting out again with “They are getting on much better now—

they've a lodger, you know, sir," he said, turning partly towards Mr. Rhys, "I dare say you've seen him—he's always wandering about—we often wish he knew you, for he's constantly grumbling about not being able to get at any books here."

"I don't wonder at it, poor fellow—who is he, Hugh?"

"A Mr. Rymer."

"Rymer," echoed the antiquary, half carelessly, half musingly, "it's familiar, somehow, yet I'm sure I don't know any man with such a name."

"To say the truth, sir, Kezia and I don't think it *is* his real name," said Hugh.

"I can't think how it is I seem to know it, Catherine," he said, his whole face and voice changing to a strange tenderness as he uttered her name, and turned towards her.

But having turned, he stood still as stone.

She knew how bloodless her lips and cheeks had become, but as he turned she did not think he could know what had brought this deadly faintness over her—she expected some

cry of surprise—fear—solicitude, but still felt that he was looking and was silent. Did he remember Cunliff's second name? It was written in a book he had given her when they first knew each other, and that book she had sent, with others, to her husband, when he was in Italy. Could it be that he remembered it?

Hugh, watching them, thought Mr. Rhys must be paralysed with grief or fear at his wife's sudden illness, and seeing him so motionless, said—

“What shall I do, sir? Shall I ring? I have noticed Mrs. Rhys growing so pale, but I did not know she was ill.”

“I am better—I think the room is close,” came in a laboured whisper from the white lips.

“Well, good morning, Hugh, I wish you all prosperity,” said Mr. Rhys, in a cold forced voice.

“Good bye, sir, thank you for all your kindness.”

So Hugh passed out of the room where he had spent so many delightful hours, laying

down on a bookshelf, as he went by it, the little purse Mrs. Rhys had given him.

When Catherine felt she was alone with her husband her deadly faintness came back ; she closed her eyes and did not open them till the sharp shutting of the door made her spring to her feet, with a suppressed cry.

He had gone away !

She went to the door, then to the window, with a sort of weak, wild, hopeless, impetuosity.

Near the window was a cast of a curious old cross—in which she had taken an interest when she had first seen this room a year ago. It was from the “Maen Achwynfan,” or “Stone of Lamentation,” near Whitford. She had heard from her husband how penances were finished there, and how tears of contrition and humiliation were shed there in olden times ; earlier even than the ninth century.

As she faced it now in her inexpressible terror and anguish, she wondered whether the many burthened souls who had sought relief at its foot, had found what they

sought. And then, without waiting to conjecture yes or no, she sank down herself before it with a cry as bitter as any pilgrim penitent that ever sought it could have uttered.

CHAPTER V.

A VISITOR AT THE ABBEY FARM.

IT was fair-day at Dolgarrog, and William Chidlaw, the young master of the abbey farm, had gone there with two of his men ; and the abbey farm yard, in consequence, was shut in by its great gates, and was so quiet and sunny that the Reverend Daniel Lloyd found it a pleasanter study than his damp little parlour, or the great refectory where his boys were buzzing over their lessons.

He was pacing slowly up and down, from the refectory door to the nail-studded doors of the ruined chapel, when the yard dog woke and began to growl, looking menacingly towards the stile.

Mr. Lloyd glanced absently in the same direction.

The intruder was Mr. Rhys of Dola' Hudol.

The curate's look of quiet thoughtfulness changed to one of subdued anxiety, almost distress. He looked down at the sheet of manuscript he held, while he recovered some presence of mind before meeting his visitor ; and the last words his pen had traced happened to be such as came to him far more impressively than he had hoped could ever affect others for whom they were written.

He had earnestly desired to keep the secret of the poor young wife, if it were possible to do so with honour to her and to himself. And though he had refused to be present at her meeting with the stranger, unless she gave him permission to tell her husband all he knew, if he saw such a course was best, he had earnestly hoped it would not be necessary to take advantage of her promise.

The countenance of his visitor, gave him nothing but the most gloomy forebodings ; and turning his eyes from it to his page of manuscript, they rested on the words his pencil had just written :—

“ It is often to those very persons who think that the truth would ruin them, that it is simply salvation.”

Mr. Rhys had two very distinctive manners of speaking. When he dwelt on the ancient glories of Wales, or on the pages of an ancient illumination, he would be discursive, eloquent —full in his speech, but also slow. When, on the contrary, he was in action he spoke few, but curt and decisive words, such as habit of command abroad had given him. It was thus he now spoke to the Curate, after they had shaken hands silently ; and Daniel Lloyd could see that he scarcely remembered, as he went on, what was due to him whom he addressed.

“ You have seen my wife, lately ?”

“ Yes.”

“ Will you be good enough to tell me what passed ?”

“ I do not know that I can do that.”

“ Indeed !”

“ Candidly, Mr. Rhys, I would have been very glad to have seen you here on any other business.”

“ We may agree in that, Mr. Lloyd.”

The Curate paused a moment, with eyes bent on the ground as if in reflection, then began, bluntly, and with effort—

“The Sunday before your return, Mrs. Rhys came to our English service. Only two or three other persons were present, one of them my old pupil. After the service she went out ; but while I was unrobing she came back in deep agitation, and shutting the doors, came towards me with a cry of anguish and fell down at my feet.

“Astonished, I endeavoured to raise her ; and failing that—for she clung to my knees—I strove to quiet her, and induce her to speak.

“When she did so, it was in broken murmurs, reminding me of the next Sunday’s communion I had announced, and of the words in the Prayer Book, authorizing those who need it, to seek counsel beforehand.

“She did need it, she said ; and at last I drew from her that there was some one hovering about in the neighbourhood to see her, whom, to use her own words, it was not for her soul’s health she should see.

“Shocked as I was, I could not but see how wisely she had resolved, by making this appeal, and I assured her of my fullest help and sympathy.”

"Did she tell you who ?—"

"No," said the curate ; "nor would she tell me, in spite of my strong reproof. But she promised me solemnly, that if he compelled the meeting, I should be not far off, to protect her, and her name, and yours. He did compel that meeting—I too went—and I never lost sight of them till they separated. That is substantially all I know. And I believe he yielded to her resolve, and left her in peace."

"And you—a minister of Christ—did not think it necessary or right to inform me ?"

"What good could I have hoped for in doing so ?" demanded the Curate. "What could I have said but that which I now say—deal tenderly with your wife. She has erred, I doubt not; but not too far to be readily forgiven. As I am Christ's minister, I say to you, one such sinner who repents is, or ought to be, dearer than a thousand who have not known her temptations, and would have sunk irretrievably if they had."

Mr. Rhys listened in gloomy silence, and walked two or three times with the Curate to

and fro on the grassy avenue, then abruptly took his leave with the words :

“ I thank you. Perhaps I have been harsh. You confirm, then, my wife’s statement, that you knew of her meeting with—with—before it took place ?”

“ I do, most emphatically.”

“ Can you tell me anything more about him, Mr. Lloyd ?”

“ Nothing.”

“ Good morning, Mr. Lloyd.”

“ Stay—if you please, one moment. Your wife sought me first. You seek now. I did not seek her. I do not seek you. But you are here. Pardon me, then, if I ask you what benefit can accrue from your discovery of this man, whoever he be, if it is clear your wife and he no longer hold any kind of communion ?”

There was a kind of smile, and a rising of the eyebrows, and a dreamy, vacant look in Mr. Rhys’ face, as he listened to this ; but now, as elsewhere, through the brief interview, he did not trouble himself with what Daniel Lloyd thought, but what Daniel Lloyd could tell. For that alone he had evi-

dently come, and looked baffled that he got no other answer.

"Beware! my dear sir, I entreat you," said the Curate, earnestly. "Beware how you reject the wife that turns to you in time. If I understand her rightly, she must need you now more than ever she did in her life before need you, your respect, your love, your returning confidence——"

"Thanks!" said Mr. Rhys, interrupting him. He put out his hand, which the Curate clasped and held, looking wistfully in the hard face, but seeing nothing there, was fain to let the hand go.

As Mr. Rhys walked away, the Curate looked after him, remembering he had not told him all; for he had not told him how earnestly he had striven to persuade Mrs. Rhys to speak to her husband, or to let him (Lloyd), speak to him. Neither did he tell Mr. Rhys that he had only consented to be silent at his wife's appeal, on receiving her solemn and voluntary promise never again to see this stranger, unless in case of absolute necessity; and then that he, the Curate, should know.

He looked after the tall menacing form, and sighed heavily as he turned to go back to his damp little study. The sunny, clean-swept yard had lost its charm for him.

CHAPTER VI.

HUGH'S LAST HOURS AT HOME.

THEY were too busy at Bod Elian to give way to much grief at the thoughts of the approaching separation, for Kezia's furniture had arrived ; and Dr. Robarts having been and seen Mr. Rymer, and given orders that he should be removed, as soon as possible, to a livelier room, they were all assisting in fitting up the two new parlours for his use.

By tea time this was accomplished, and the invalid was helped down stairs by Elias, and led into a bright little bower, the existence of which, in such a place, he could scarcely understand. As he lay back on the little sofa, looking round the room, he felt that it was charming, but in what its charm lay he could not conceive.

The new paper on the wall was false in design, and gaudy in colour ; the carpet almost threadbare, the furniture black and wormeaten. Yet everything seemed harmonious and pleasant. The darkness of the furniture perhaps sent the eye gratefully to the bright roses on the wall, though they might be out of drawing ; and their brightness, again, made the dingy carpet pleasant to rest on. White full curtains at the two little windows threw an air of dainty elegance over all. A fire was burning in the bright new grate. Kezia's old time-piece, with its white face and black frame, ticked on the mantle-shelf. A plate of African marigolds stood in each window, and filled the room with rich aromatic odour ; and a few branches of mountain ash berries, and a pale China rose, were set in a vase on the table among the tiny tea service, every piece of which had been wrapped up separately and packed away for years in a box of Kezia's mother's.

The sofa was so placed that he could see, through the window, the wildest side of Moel Mawr, where furze-fires were flaming up fitfully in the twilight. He could see through

the door, too, which he had begged might remain open, into the passage, along which some one or other would be constantly passing ; and now and then a door on the other side was left open, and he could see into the great kitchen where Hugh was spending his last few hours, regarding grudgingly every little duty which took either his brother, or Hirell, or Kezia, during one of those precious moments, from his sight.

Rymer saw that tea was spread there also, and that the brothers, unlike their usual custom, were sitting side by side at the table —their faces towards him. Hugh very often had to get up and leave Elias to go and speak to some one who came to the outer door to wish him farewell.

Such visitors were frequent, and Rymer fancied that the lad's voice was less and less cheery and strong every time he answered their adieus and good wishes.

Rymer knew when the time for the parting had come, for Elias rose and said something to Hugh, who got up also, and followed him out of the room.

Hirell and Kezia lingered a little while, then they too went out.

The brothers had gone into the old parlour, which was generally called Elias's room, because his bureau was in it, and he sat here at his accounts a good part of every afternoon.

When Elias had shut the door, he turned to Hugh and said :

"I can only give you money enough for your journey, and to keep you for one week."

Hugh nodded sadly, and Elias knew his sadness was not at having so little to take with him, but at having to take it at all.

"Look here, Hugh," said Elias ; and he lifted up the lid of the bureau.

Hugh looked, and saw just what he knew he should see—little packets of bills and letters in perfect order—the old account book lying open, and the Bible beside it. Hugh saw that the last entry was his brother's gift to him, and that there was left in hand—nothing.

Hugh stood looking at the figures gloomily, and thinking that Elias might have spared him the sight.

"How can I take it, Elias," he asked, almost reproachfully, "what will you do?"

"Hugh," answered Elias, "I did not show you this to prove how poor I am after this poor gift to you. I wished to tell you the comfort I have found in order and accuracy. I have been rich, and I have been poor, and I have come to believe that in poverty alone can a man rule his soul and his fortunes, with something of that divine order by which the mighty possessions of God are ruled. Here are two books;" and he gave him two like those that laid in his bureau: "in one, let God see written in honest figures the exact state of your fortune, day by day; in the other, find words to tell Him the condition of your soul, and He shall cast up both for you with the eye of a father and master. Though the column where the sum of your possessions should be written is a blank, leave the blank there cheerfully, for God's eye to see; pray for your daily bread, and go forth to your work."

He closed the bureau, just as Hirell and Kezia came to the door. Hugh started, as he heard the handle turned, and glanced at

Elias. The elder brother guessed by his look that he wished to remain alone with him a minute or two longer ; and, as Hirell appeared in the doorway, raised his hand to warn her back. She nodded, and went away with Kezia.

Elias then looked enquiringly at Hugh, and was surprised to see him with a suddenly heightened colour, as he stood looking at the money in his hand. Elias sighed, for he thought that some other unavoidable expense must have occurred to perplex him.

“ What is the matter, Hugh ? ” he asked.

Hugh sat down in a chair near him at the table, on which he laid the money, and began to move one coin after another, as if counting it slowly.

“ Well, Hugh.”

“ Perhaps,” said Hugh, “ I had better not say it now ; perhaps I’d better write to you, Elias.”

“ If you have anything you wish to relieve your mind of, why not do it at once, Hugh ? Are you sure it is something you wish me to know ? ”

“ I do ; I do, Elias. I wish you knew. I know you ought to know.”

"Then tell it me simply, lad."

"Oh, Elias ! perhaps you guess it. Sometimes I think you do."

"I never guess," answered Elias ; "I have enough to do to understand and cope with what I know."

"But you must have thought sometimes—"

"What about ?"

"Kezia," said Hugh ; "that I care for her ; that I love her."

Hugh was accustomed to long silences, on his brother's part, in times of surprise or excitement, but no silence had ever seemed so long or so oppressive as this which followed his own agitated, hastily uttered confession.

Elias was standing at the window, with his back towards him. He had not been standing so when Hugh began to speak.

Suddenly he turned round.

"Have you told her ? Does she know ?" he asked.

"I never said anything to her till last night."

"And it was after you spoke," asked Elias, in a slow measured tone, "that she wished to come home ?"

"Yes ; but I don't know if it was through my speaking. I do not know if she even understood me," said Hugh.

"Do you wish to speak to her now, before you go ?"

"I think not. I think I could not, Elias—going out of this place as she knows I go—a beggar. No ; I'll wait till I have done something to give her faith in me, and to give you faith in me, Elias."

And Hugh rose, with a light in his face that seemed to say he meant that something to be very great and decisive, but his brother's glance did not respond to it.

At this minute, Hirell and Kezia came again to the door to say that the car which was to take Hugh to Aber was waiting. Kezia, in her quiet, subdued way, went straight up to Hugh to say something about his things.

Elias watched her with a strange, wistful scrutiny.

"Here is a list of the things I have not marked, Hugh," said Kezia, slipping a little piece of paper in his hand ; "pray don't forget to get the ink, and mark them as you promised."

Elias watched her glance at Hugh's troubled face, and then turn away gently, as feeling she should have no place in his thoughts or sight at such a time. *Did* she feel this? he wondered.

Kezia let them all go before her into the hall, and stood waiting, feeling a pleasant confidence in soon hearing the young man's footsteps come in her direction.

She waited, listening to the boxes being lifted into the car, and to the confusion of footsteps in the hall.

"Now he must be coming," she thought, and a gentle, motherly yearning came into her eyes. The next minute, those soft eyes of Kezia looked startled and grieved, for the wheels of the car were heard cutting sharply through the moist gravel.

Surely it was not possible Hugh had gone without wishing her good-bye! Then she heard Hirell go back into the kitchen to speak to Nanny. Then Elias came towards the stairs before which Kezia stood.

"Oh, Elias!" she cried out in a pained voice, "did he forget me?"

Elias looked at her sharply, and passed by her, and went up-stairs without a word.

Kezia stood still, pursing her mouth and bridling her neck a little, and the tears rose to her eyes ; but after a little while she wiped them meekly away, saying to herself :

“ They have too much upon them to think of me ; ” and then she went about her work as cheerfully as ever.

In about an hour she had so quieted her mind, as to be able to sing one of the hymns she had heard at Aber Chapel the previous evening. Her soft voice penetrated one of the upper rooms, the door of which had been closed and locked since Hugh’s departure. As Kezia’s voice came softly stealing up, the door was opened, and Elias stood on the staircase looking down and listening.

It was a dove-like, soothing voice, neither very sweet nor very powerful, but soft and winning and full of peace. It was not a voice to excite any powerful emotion ; yet, as Elias listened, his chest heaved, and he said in a low, deep voice :—

“ Lord, I thank thee, that she can sing in my service, though he is gone.”

There were other ears that also found the voice of Kezia pleasant. Mr. Rymer, in his little quaint parlour, with its mixture of age and newness, listened to it with a great sense of peace. It had been a strange day for him altogether. A soft, continuous flow of fresh, healthful visions and sounds, had pressed back old thoughts with a strange, sweet pertinacity, that even habit and sickness could resist.

When he first woke in the morning, he remembered that the previous day had not gone by exactly as the days had done for so long—the night closing on him like an additional prison door, none the less gloomy and hopeless to him, if nailed with stars. What had made it different? He looked at a sunbeam lying across the splintery floor, and that reminded him of a name which made him smile as he said it to himself. A soft lowing of cattle drew his eyes to the field before his window, and what he saw, made him say the name again. He had looked at the flowers when he came into the room where he sat now, and they too brought the name to his thoughts and lips.

As he sat listening to Kezia's singing, he was also listening for a step to return—a step that had gone away a few minutes since. He had listened to it all day, as it fell along the passages, upon the stairs ; it seemed to have a music—a meaning different from all other footsteps.

Soon he heard it going past his window, and then he heard another footstep join it, and knew that Elias and his daughter were walking up and down on the little raised path on which the window of the bed-room opened. The one footstep sounded heavy and despairing ; the other light and blithe.

Rymer went to the window, and sat down behind the curtain. He saw the two standing still there—Hirell looking at the stars that were crowding out everywhere, Elias looking at her with his slow, wondering gaze.

"What are you thinking of, Hirell ?" Rymer heard him ask, when they had stood so for some time. He spoke in a wistful, pathetic voice, as if wearying for some of the light that he saw on her face.

"I was thinking, father," answered Hirell,

"while this our world is growing dark, how many, many worlds grow bright."

Then Kezia called Hirell, and Rymer saw Elias standing looking at the stars alone and bareheaded.

CHAPTER VII.

THE VIRGIN MARTYR.

ABOUT half an hour later, coming from his bedroom into his little parlour adjoining it, he saw Hirell and Nanny, who had just brought in his supper, holding up something between them, and looking at it in a passion of admiration.

He stood a moment without disturbing them, listening to their exclamations, of which the tone only was comprehensible to him.

They were holding, carefully spread out, an artist's proof of an engraving of the Virgin Martyr. He had that evening taken it from his portmanteau, where it had lain rolled up since he left London, and had opened it out on the table.

There was no mistaking the poise of Nanny's rough head, nor the parted lips and dilating

eyes of Hirell, as the two girls held it up between them.

Suddenly the door opening between this and his bed-room creaked.

Hirell started and cried imperatively to Nanny to let go.

Nanny glanced carelessly towards the door, and seeing no one there—for Rymer was just behind her—retained her hold on the picture, answering Hirell's entreaty by a rude refusal, continued to feast her eyes upon it.

Hirell implored, commanded, and thinking Nanny would yield, tried to draw it from her. Nanny gave it a rough pull and tore it right across the centre.

Hirell dropped it and burst into tears. She had never seen a picture anything like it before, and vaguely estimated its value as something immense.

Rymer approached, making the aghast and contrite Nanny jump as she saw him so close to her.

"I hope," said he to Hirell as he touched the torn picture, "it isn't this little accident that's distressing you? The thing is of no value whatever."

Hirell lifted her tearful eyes in a timid amazement to his ; and then Nanny and she looked at each other as two penniless wayfarers might do, hearing a prince declare the same after having had his watch and diamond ring stolen from him. How rich he must be to call this worthless !

“Indeed, sir, I am truly sorry and ashamed, I am, indeed,” Hirell said with such a sweet and utterly humble look of sorrow, that he was at once amused—charmed—yet quite grieved that she should take the trifling accident so much to heart.

“I assure you it doesn’t matter in the least. You seemed pleased with the picture,” he said looking at it carelessly as it lay torn on the table.

“O sir, it is the most wonderful thing I ever saw in my life ; and to think—”

And she drooped her wet flushed face and went slowly from the room, murmuring :

“I must go and tell father about it, and see what is to be done.”

Rymer followed her after a minute’s perplexity, and found that Elias was not in the kitchen but out in the front field. It was

yet early, and Kezia was setting off to Dolgarrog to make some purchases for the lodger.

Seeing this he went back to his room, and waited with some impatience for her inevitable visit to him before such an expedition, and the usual timid enquiry as to whether she could do anything for him at the town. He was not supposed to know she went there purposely for him.

This evening when she came, instead of the surly "no, thank you," she was entrusted with a delicate little commission, which put her into a sad state of nervousness.

She was repaid, however, on her return, by the perfect satisfaction and polite thanks of Mr. Rymer ; who immediately after opening the little parcels she brought him, set to work with paste, pasteboard, and little tacks, with gum, camel's hair pencil, and dark paints, to the great surprise and curiosity of Nanny. Just before prayer time, when Elias was taking his good-night look into the stable and cow-houses, and Hirell and Kezia were knitting in the kitchen, Mr. Rymer issued from his room with something in his hands.

He approached Hirell and held it before her with a smile.

It was the torn picture wonderfully mended ; mounted and framed in a plain, bright gilt frame.

"Is it worth being hung up in your room now ? I am afraid not," he said meeting her wondering eyes with a strange thrill of delight.

"My room, sir," echoed Hirell faintly.

"Or anywhere you like. I have put it together for you as well as I could, as you liked it so much."

Hirell rose, putting her little hands timidly on the frame, but so tremulously that he thought if he let go it would fall.

Again she looked full into his eyes, her own strangely bright — her cheeks a shade paler than usual — it seemed, he thought, if not too absurd to believe—with emotion.

"You have done this for—me ? You give it to me ?" she said.

"No, perhaps not ; it's not worth having, is it ?" said he pretending to draw it away.

Then her fingers took firmer hold on it.

Once having it out of his hands, the joy of possession made her forget herself.

"Kezia!" she cried in a voice of sweet childish triumph. "Look—it is mine—my very own!"

"But you have never thanked Mr. Rymer, Hirell," said Kezia reprovingly.

"No; and I never can," she replied turning to him suddenly, with swimming eyes, "only when I look at it—only then to myself."

"Nonsense, child," said Kezia in Welsh, "you can say thank you."

"Yes, I can say—thank you." And she looked over her picture at him, and uttered the two words with a mixture of delight, despair of being able to express her delight and of entreaty to him to believe in her gratitude.

The look and voice haunted him all night. Several times he found himself shaken by a tender laughter, as he thought of Hirell and Nanny over the torn picture; and constantly when he hardly suspected himself of thinking

about her, his lips twitched with some such exclamation as—

“Quaint little creature!”

“Solemn, delicious gratitude.”

“Sweet, holy little face!”

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTERNOON AT DOLA' HUDOL.

ON his return from the Abbey farm Mr. Rhys went into his library, where such pleasant hours had been spent that morning, and after standing hesitatingly a minute before the bell-rope rang.

“Ask your mistress to be kind enough to come to me here,” he said to the servant, and then sat down in the throne-like chair, took a pen and sheet of note paper, and began to write a letter.

Before five minutes had passed, his wife came in. He did not look up, or take any notice, but her keen eye saw that he was conscious of her presence. She put on no assumption of carelessness or annoyance, but walked straight up to the window, and stood

by the table where he was writing, and looked gravely out on to the lawn.

His hand trembled a little at feeling her so near. It was hard to sit unmoved while she stood there in her sweet, pale, morning colours, fresh as the new blown bells of the convolvulus, that waved against the window—hard to know how the living gold of her hair was glittering in the sun, nor dare to lift his eyes to it—hard to know the sweet rose on her cheek was deepening in colour at his silence, yet remain mute—to feel the kindling fire of her blue, averted eye, and keep his own cold—to know how her breast was heaving with the misery of her young, passionate heart, and not fall down a cringing lover at her feet, and sue for it once more.

But a little quiver of the hand, and the passion was subdued ; he wrote on ; his wife waited at the window, and whenever she glanced at him his profile was cold as that of his bust on the bookcase.

At last he felt she was beginning to be impatient—to lose her self-command. Perhaps he needed this to begin his task at all.

She walked once or twice to the door. Suddenly she turned upon him.

"Owen!" she said, in a rich, half-laughing voice, while her eyes looked at him gravely enough, "if ever I commit suicide, it will be while I am waiting for you to speak. For God's sake, say what you have to say. Your words may kill me, but your silence maddens me, and I'd rather be killed than sent mad. If I am what I am sane, God knows what I should be as a lunatic."

He paused in his writing, looked up at her, laid down his pen, and said with the old courtesy :

"Pardon me, I forgot, I hoped to have finished this before speaking to you. I am writing to your uncle."

"To my uncle!" Was it merely the fire-light he saw suddenly reflected in his wife's eyes, or was it—but he did not choose to pause to answer himself.

"Owen, beware! I can bear much. You may easily degrade me in my own eyes, almost as much as I see I am already degraded in your eyes—but—but—he loves me—is the one being that thinks me not altogether worth-

less. You would not—oh, you would not ruin me with him—my last friend !”

“ I desire, Catherine, to spare you every pain that your own behaviour has left it in my power to spare you ; but as regards your uncle——”

“ As regards him,” she interrupted, “ if you are wise, you will be silent. He will believe me, if I must speak. In heaven’s name, Owen, let us both spare the old man. You, like myself, have had much kindness from him.”

“ You are too quick—too impetuous. I beg you to be calm. You are young, and can bear, perhaps, these exhausting emotions ; I am old, and cannot. You have discovered, Catherine, though somewhat late, that I am old ; pray, then, let age have its needful immunities.”

“ O, my husband ! What madness possesses you, that you fling your words at me like those poisoned weapons, that you once told me about, as in use among barbarous nations ? Why do you use these cruel sarcasms ? When did I ever show you by look, or word, or act, that your age is—”

"What! do you reject the one excuse that even I can find for you—ay, in my very heart? Shall I, because I played the fool once in marrying you, never again cease to play the fool? You are wrong, unreasonable, unjust to yourself. You have taught me much!"

He ceased; and taking no heed of the bitter distress that she could no longer hide, turned away, and again went on with his letter.

It would seem that Catherine had come into the room possessed by some secret desire, or determination, that enabled her to bear up against the terrible severity of his words.

Again she interrupted him:

"Have you seen Mr. Lloyd?"

"Yes."

"Does he confirm my statement to you?"

He was silent.

"I know he does," she said, "and, Owen, I know not whether it is God that prompts me, in spite of myself, to do now what is so hopeless; but see—my husband—I kneel to you, and ask you, perhaps for the last time in life, to listen to me."

"Do not mock me," he answered, "any

more by idle appeals. If you will be good enough to be silent for a few minutes—”

“No, Owen, I will not be silent. I do not know what new outrage on me you are meditating.”

“You shall know, soon!” he said, with a quietude of tone that only made the listener more and more desperate.

“Owen, you have hitherto seen in me a woman conscious of error, deeply repentant for it, making all restitution in her power, stopping in time; see here, in the presence of God and the dear Saviour of mankind, I swear to you, I stopped in time, and with the strongest resolution and desire to be to you once more an honest wife. But you believe nothing, you thrust me back upon my miserable self, even when my heart goes out towards you; you are blind to all that ought to satisfy you—my own isolation here, Mr. Lloyd’s testimony, your own letter—”

She paused as she thought of that letter, lest once more grief should conquer the rising anger which she now wished to call forth.

“What letter?” he demanded, not looking

up nor removing his pen or eye from the paper.

"That one you wrote me, from the continent, so noble in its language, so confiding.—Ah! do you not know, have you never yet suspected, that it was that suddenly changed me? Owen, do you not know that?"

He made no answer, but remained in his bent position, as if he could not trust himself to speak.

"I cannot, I will not, live in this fearful, this wretched, state! I demand now, then, that you speak plainly out—here, if you please, and now—else before my uncle, to whom I myself will go, and before him challenge you to impeach my innocence!"

"Catherine, while I try incessantly to narrow the ground between us, you make it wider at every step. I want to think of you as well as I can. I want to take things as they are. I am too old to dream. The days of romance are gone for me. Would they had never been revived, as they have been, to tell me what I have lost. Why, then, are you not content?"

“Content! To be suspected of I know not what! Watched at every turn! Unable to say one truthful word, without finding it come back to me stamped, like a base coin, with fraud. No; I will bear this no longer. Say then, plainly, what you have to say; and I will defend myself, with God’s help, as I best can.”

He gazed at her with surprise, wonder, almost admiration, for a single moment, then pushed aside his writing desk, and rose to his feet; and then, as if beginning at last to share her own agitation, he walked once from end to end of the room; then returned, again sat and gazed once more in silence upon her anguished, burning face.

“So be it,” at last he said, and he spoke with extreme deliberation as one might suppose a just judge to speak when compelled, by some unhappy combination of circumstances, to give judgment in a matter affecting most deeply his own most sacred interests.

“Do you know that handwriting?” he asked, placing before her a short and merely complimentary note, professing to be written from London, on some unimportant matter,

from Mr. Cunliff to herself, on the very day of her meeting with him at the Maiden's lake. This bore the London post-mark of the day after—had come by the morning mail—and been delivered the same afternoon.

Scarcely knowing what to say, or to do, and naturally truthful, she faintly responded,

“Yes.”

“Read it,” said her husband. “I received it and opened it the day after that of *my* meeting with you, *and his*.”

When she had done so, and noticed the date, she understood, in a moment, its intention, and was lost in wonder to know how the thing had been done.

Cunliff, as he reached Dolgarrog on that memorable evening, was in one of those moods when the most desperate things seem the most prudent. He sat down, wrote a few words with forced slowness and care, put them into an envelope, with a few words addressed to his housekeeper, got out a saddled horse, which he occasionally hired, and, riding at an almost incredible pace, reached a place eighteen miles distant, before the mail cart that had started more than half an hour be-

fore ; there found the night mail train, and a passenger who undertook to deliver the letter immediately the mail arrived in London. He had done so soon after daybreak, the housekeeper, obeying the order enclosed, drove off to St. Martin's Le Grand, and posted the letter, which returned to Wales by the day-mail, and was delivered the same afternoon at Dola' Hudol. All this Cunliff did, besides getting back the same night so as to cause no remark from Chamberlayne, in the mere hope that he might thus help Mrs. Rhys to convince her husband (if necessary,) that he, Cunliff, was in London when that letter was written.

“ And you opened this ? ” said Mrs. Rhys, after a prolonged pause.

“ I did—when I found you still silent as to the meeting I had interrupted. You wonder at me, Catherine, I know. Well, I confess I wonder at myself; the change was sudden from faith to incredulity. But consider that seemingly courteous, and most innocent letter. Do you believe it ? ”

“ Had you asked me at the time I could have replied to you,” said Mrs. Rhys, with a

touch of the sex's skill in answering difficult questions by a retort on the questioner.

"I read this, and of course ought to have believed that this Mr. Cunliff was in London, when he seemed, to my imperfect vision, to be much nearer to me and you. What I did was to write to a friend, who learned for me that Mr. Cunliff had left London before the date of that letter, and had not returned since. That, then, Catherine, is one of your friends—a trickster, who, no doubt for excellent reasons, finds it necessary to lie in this fashion. Do you desire me to go further? It is my turn, wife, to ask you to spare me. I have loved my wife—honoured her—and the contrast is too painful."

"Do you make me responsible for Mr. Cunliff's doings?"

"Yes; while you stand at his side, and dishonestly shelter him, and refuse to say, 'That is the villain!'"

"Owen, Cunliff is no villain!"

"Ah, indeed! Come. Try me. I can listen, if you please, to all his virtues. I should like, indeed, to be sure that it is a noble victim who—"

He stopped ; and evidently with the manner of one who goes further than he intended.

"Goes to the sacrifice !—is that what you were about to say ?"

"Look to yourself, woman. I will deal with him."

She was about to reply, but checked herself as she noted the unerring sign that was for an instant visible on his face. Yes, she could read there, vengeance, and an unsleeping energy of purpose.

A sudden calmness came over, for him. For him—Cunliff—she suddenly found the power she had failed to evoke for herself ; for he was in danger, beyond all question. Yet how ? To what extent ? Had her husband already seen him ?

"You bid me, Owen, look to myself. That is what I seek to do, now that you drive me to extremities. Is this, then, all you have to lay to my charge in explanation of your recent behaviour to me ? Is this all, that Mr. Cunliff has written me such a letter ?"

He looked at her with surprise, as if thinking of her audacity, and almost he seemed to feel the pity of it—that he must go on.

"If I understand you, Catherine, rightly—I mean as to what you wish me to think about you—your understanding with Mr. Lloyd was that you were never more to hold any kind of communication with the stranger that it was possible to avoid. Do you wish me to believe that you have kept that engagement?"

Her slow speech gave her, so it seemed, a few extra seconds of time in which to think of the answer to this dreadful question.

If she acknowledged the last interview, she felt there would be no limit to the severity of his judgments, because no longer would he listen to any thing but his own absolute certainty of her guilt.

"I do wish you so to believe," she said in a hard, but firm tone.

"Liar!" he cried, "Do I convict you at last!"

He went to the handle of the bell, to pull it, in awful silence.

"What would you do?" she asked.

"Call the servant, who has seen him and you exchange communications—O shameless woman—within this very week!"

“ Owen, Owen ; stop ; hear me. I—I am innocent of aught but the despair you force into my soul—innocent—in—”

She had fainted ; and Mr. Rhys was for some time unable to complete the business on which he had set his heart. When she revived, slowly, silently, the courage of despair began to strengthen the unhappy woman, and so feeling she said to him, when an hour or more had passed and he had finished his letter—

“ Please to express your will, and let me go.”

“ Can you listen to the letter I have written to your uncle ?”

“ I will try,” she said, with a sweet and most cruel smile that almost repaid to him the pain he had inflicted on her.

He began to read it, thus :—

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I write to ask from you a personal favour. It is that you will receive Catherine for a time, the duration of which it is now impossible to fix, in your house ; and with the understanding that she receives no visitors

but your visitors, and never leaves your house and grounds, without your express permission.

"How much is involved in these requests, I, alas ! of all men, have the saddest reason to know. Nor should I put them to you—how could I ?—for myself ; but I do put them and urge them for her.

"She has deeply wronged me, but to what extent, I leave her to explain. I am willing to hope for the best. I demand that for a time, at least, she keeps aloof from society ; and I in return will do my best to hold her reputation safe before the world, so long, at least, as she will let me.

"I grieve to see that I am not writing as I intended to write. The bitterness of the heart, I feel, is infecting my every word, and making me unjust.

"I do think she is personally innocent. I do think for one so young, so beautiful, so inexpressibly lovely in that loveliness of the spirit which is as heaven to earth compared with the body's attractions—I do think, I repeat, that all these things, with my own age and rigidity of character, may excuse her

in your eyes. Ah!—I would to God that they might in mine too. You do not know—she does not—how I worshipped her.

“I dreamed again I was of the kind capable of loving and being loved. All the chivalry of the past seemed to be revived—all the romance of my youth, and I said, my life may be of little worth to her, but it cannot but be glorified in such light, and whatever I am, or have, or may be, all is hers.

“What my state is now, it is worse than useless to speak of, if she be lost to me.

“Ah, sir! will you try to win her back to me?

“Hear her story. Keep her by your side. Win her confidence. Then—though not too soon—write to me. If you can then say in solemn truthfulness of soul, ‘Take back your wife; she is no longer unworthy of the love of an honest man’,—then, indeed, will I give her, what now I cannot, my trust.

“Dare I still think this may yet be so? My life cannot be prolonged to any great extent, but whatever it be, then it shall be devoted once more to her, to smooth over the past, to struggle for a future—one where

I may indeed feel peace—and so feeling, may show to her an old man's boundless gratitude."

She had never once interrupted him, except by the occasional, half-stifled cry of despair his words wrung from her; but when he had finished, she rose hastily, wiped away the moisture off her face, and said with sudden animation :

" Owen, I accept this—I do—indeed I do ; and now will you let us part, as we should part. Oh ! my husband—my heart still beats for you—and your happiness—if—if—"

He could no longer resist. Before he was himself conscious of what he was doing, he opened his arms, and she flung herself upon his breast, and wept there a long time.

After a time she whispered—

" When do you wish me to go ?"

" To-morrow. We will ride together to the station, then part—your groom and maid going with you."

" Very well."

" Do you, Catherine, now see why I have done this ?"

"No."

"Because I feel I am no fit judge of my own case. My heart seems to harden against you—while—while—"

"I understand. This, then, is our farewell?"

"Yes—substantially."

"Then, O my husband, will you not—not even—say—God bless you?"

She knelt down, with bowed head.

His trembling hands were upon her—his murmured words floated in her ear—unrecognized, yet fully understood.

"And pardon?"

"Do you deserve that, Catherine?"

She looked up at him. He had not spoken severely, she saw.

"I do! as God is my other Judge, I do!"

"Take it, then—and let us both hope all the barriers are removed that lie between us and a future."

"One word more. You spoke as if desiring vengeance—"

She could go no further—so terrible was the look that came upon his face.

She would not be warned. Cunliff was in

danger—that was all she could think of. She prayed in her inmost soul not to be obliged to see him or write to him ever again. But she could not allow him to—

“Owen, you have forgiven me—you must also forgive him.”

“Catherine, I will not be tempted. There has been enough, and too much, of violence. Leave him to God !”

“Will you do so ?”

He went away without answering her question.

Catherine had said before that his silence maddened her—but never had it been to her so terrible as now.

In the night she made a resolution—reckless of consequences, and in the morning she carried it out as recklessly.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MOUNTAIN ORCHARD.

MRS. RHYS rode over to Capel Illtyd before breakfast next morning. When she reached the gate of the lowest field of Bod Elian, she got down from her horse, and told her groom she was going to walk up to see the people at the farm.

She had a vague hope of meeting Cunliff rambling about before she reached the house ; but her determination to warn him was so fixed, and her fears, as concerned her own safety so slight, that she scarcely paused once to think how or where the interview she wished for was to take place.

In this manner, defying more and more the danger that became more and more apparent to her as she went on, Mrs. Rhys reached the flat field in front of Bod Elian.

The doors were open—the house seemed empty, and indeed it was just the time when Nanny was away with the cows, and Elias had ridden out to set the men to their day's work.

Standing hesitatingly a minute at the open door, Mrs. Rhys thought she heard voices somewhere behind the house, and gathering up the skirt of her habit, walked quickly round towards the garden trees.

In the wall that enclosed those trees, she saw a broken door swinging back on its hinges ; she entered by this, and found herself in a garden. On her right was a long path, sloping downward ; on her left a flight of uneven steps, with moss and ferns growing out of them. The instant that she reached that spot she heard Cunliff's voice—not so as to understand a word he was saying—but only in a murmur, audible enough for her to know it was his voice. It came from somewhere above. She looked up, and saw that the steps led to a little orchard, whose trees bore scarcely anything but moss upon their branches, which were all bent one way by the sea wind that came along the valley on the other side.

Mrs. Rhys mounted the steps in that same spirit of impetuous courage and generosity that had let her dare so much already in coming to Bod Elian on such an errand.

She followed the only path she saw in the weird little orchard, and it took her straight to the other side, where the valley, with its walls of mountains, its glittering little thread of a river, and the great flashing line of sea at the end, burst suddenly upon her view.

But the beautiful valley, in all the glory of the morning sun, was only a background to the picture by which the eyes of Catherine Rhys, in their brave, reckless search, were suddenly riveted. Just before where she stood a part of the loose stone wall had fallen long ago ; and the stones, all thickly cushioned with moss, were scattered for some way down a little green hill, at one side of which a waterfall dashed down with a force and noise as if it had all the sea in its flow.

On one of these stones sat the man for whose sake her heart was so full of misery—her eyes so dim with midnight tears that she could scarcely bear the morning sun which lit the picture. There he sat, looking in

tender, smiling interest, at a girl, whom apparently some question of his had plunged in a fit of sweet, thoughtful embarrassment. She was very lovely. Catherine Rhys felt her loveliness through all her heart, which seemed to drink it in like poisoned honey—the dewy hazel eyes, full of fresh fancy and tender wildness—the smiling lips—the fresh, natural grace of the form, which the poor dark clothes suited as the foliage of the young willow suits the tree—the pretty, childish fingers twining round the great horn of the cow against which she leant, with her feet crossed, and her other hand stretched down caressingly to a little calf, that rubbed its blind, soft head, against her knee—nothing was lost to Catherine's eyes, which looked upon the picture till it and they seemed both to turn to fire, and she pressed her hands over her face, but only to snatch them down and gaze once more.

CHAPTER X.

MR. CUNLIFF AGAIN VISITS DOLA' HUDOL.

KEZIA WILLIAMS was standing near the kitchen window kneading a dark mass of dough, when she saw a stranger come into the yard and look about him. One of the farm boys passing, the man stopped him, and asked him some questions which, as the boy did not answer, Kezia concluded must have been spoken in English. The man was dressed as a groom, and she thought he had, perhaps, come with an order from some large house. Muffling her hands in her apron and raising the window she asked him in English—

“What is your business, please?”

The man turned sulkily, like one who has had his patience rather sorely tried.

“Do you know if my mistress is ready?” he said.

Kezia looked perplexed.

"Whose servant are you?" she asked.

"Mr. Rhys' at Dola' Hudol. Mrs. Rhys came up here about an hour ago—she ain't gone, is she?"

Kezia was quite amazed and flustered at the idea of such a visitor, but she answered quietly—

"I have not heard of her being here, but I will see and let you know if she is ready."

She rubbed the dough from her hands and went out into the passage calling Hirell. She thought she might have met the lady of Dola' Hudol and taken her into the parlour—but that was empty, and so seemed all the house beside.

Kezia took her hat and went round toward the garden. Then she heard, as Mrs. Rhys had done, voices above in the little orchard. She went lightly up the steps, seeing no one till she came upon the same picture—the bit of broken wall, the cow, Hirell leaning against it, the little blind calf rubbing against her knees, Mr. Rymer sitting on the stone—his pale face all brightness and animation.

“Hirell,” cried Kezia with the faintest tone of reproach in her voice.

Hirell looked up and answered her gaily—

“Yes, Kezia. Do you want me?”

Rymer rose laughing, and looking, Kezia thought, a little confused.

“Have you seen Mrs. Rhys of Dola’ Hudol?”

“No, indeed—why, Kezia, is she here?” asked Hirell.

“Yes, it seems she is here—her groom is waiting—he came round to the kitchen window and asked me if she was ready. Do put up your hair, Hirell, and see about it.”

Hirell obediently raised her hands to twine up a long twisted roll that had escaped from the little brown felt hat. While she was doing so she glanced towards Rymer, and the thought struck her that she had never seen him so pale; but the idea of the distinguished visitor whom she had to seek, the beautiful wife of Hugh’s patron—had such complete possession of her mind that everything else was forgotten as she sprang over the fallen stones, and passed under the light foliage of the orchard.

Kezia went back into the house to see that it was fit for the expected guest.

When they were both gone Rymer turned and looked up after them with a face full of intense and sad alarm.

He rose feeling half stunned with the sense of some nameless calamity. Catherine here! what could have brought her? What but something worse than he dared think of?

All at once a cry reached his ears, and made his feet bound towards the spot it came from—up past the scattered stones, in under the trees.

He saw Hirell standing looking down upon the ground, and knew by her face it was she who had uttered the cry.

Before her at her feet a beautiful form lay prostrate, its hands clasped over its head, its face crushed flatly to the damp earth beside a little spring. In the long riding habit it looked as it lay of peculiarly noble stature, and as still as death.

While Hirell stood pale and amazed she saw Mr. Rymer lay his hands on the lady's shoulders and try to lift her face from the ground, and heard him whisper in a hoarse voice—

"Catherine!"

At that name a shudder shook the form and the hands unlocked. A face stained with earth was lifted suddenly. It was so shocking to see its youth, its beauty, its convulsive passion, its stains as from a grave, that Hirell burst out sobbing at the first sight of it.

Mr. Rymer looked up at her keenly—entreatingly—

"Be her friend—and mine," he besought her, "some water—here, wet me this handkerchief."

He tore it from the grasp of the little gauntleted hand. Hirell dipped it in the basin of the spring and brought it to him, and watched him touch the face with it very gently, though his hand might have been palsied to tremble as it did.

In a little while Hirell saw the lady make a sudden movement with her hand, as if to push back Mr. Rymer's, and he looked at her with a deep sorrow and tenderness and said—

"Catherine—Catherine—what made you do this?"

She smiled at him—such a smile as Hirell

had never seen before, cold, mysterious, cruel—she could not help gazing at Mr. Rymer's face to see how he received it, and she saw him turn yet a shade paler.

In another minute Mrs. Rhys was standing. She walked a few steps, slowly supporting herself by the trees—then more firmly and quickly, and without support, she went down the orchard steps, Rymer following her in silence.

Hirell found her hat upon the ground and went after them with it.

The groom was waiting at the door of the house with the two horses. Mrs. Rhys mounted with his assistance. Cunliff took her hat from Hirell and gave it to her, and she received it with the same peculiar smile.

Before her servant had mounted she had gone—leapt the field gate, and was galloping down the steep road at a fearful speed. Hirell looked at the groom and at Rymer, and with difficulty restrained from crying out.

Without a word Rymer seized the rein from the man's hand, leapt on his horse and followed.

Hirell ran to that part of the field from which she could see farther down the Dolgarrog road, and soon she saw the two horses abreast of each other, galloping towards Dola' Hudol.

Kezia saw her from the window, and came out.

"Did you see Mrs. Rhys, Hirell?" she asked, "Has she gone without coming in?"

"She has gone. She came to see Mr. Rymer, and he has gone back with her."

"Surely! how strange he knew them and has never been to Dola' Hudol before!" And Kezia went back to her bread-making puzzled, and Hirell went to work proud, secretly proud, of her sagacity in understanding from a certain tone in Rymer's voice, when he said, "be her friend and mine," that he wished this strange event to be kept a secret among those who had witnessed it.

Mr. Rhys was standing in the hall when he heard the horses coming up the park. He looked, wondering who such early visitors could be, and was greatly amazed to see his wife whom he thought to be still in her own

room. As she reined in sharply before him he looked at the gentleman who had ridden up with her to the door, and something in his pale excited face rivetted his eyes.

Cunliff saw Mrs. Rhys look from one to the other, and fall forward with a deadly sickness in her face ; and motioning Rhys, exclaimed passionately, “Quick, quick, help her ; she is ill.”

Rhys answered the appeal with a glance full of meaning, took his wife in his arms and lifted her gently to the ground.

As he turned he found Cunliff dismounted standing before him, and bowing with deep respect, hat in hand.

“I must ask your pardon for this intrusion,” said he, in a clear unfaltering voice. “I have had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Rhys in London, and finding her this morning too unwell to be riding alone or in the charge of a servant, have ventured to accompany her home.”

“I thank you,” said Mr. Rhys ; “may I know to whom I am so deeply obliged ?”

“My name is Cunliff.”

The question was asked and answered as they stood face to face. Cunliff, with one foot on the step, and the groom's thick short whip in his hand ; Rhys, with his arm round his wife, as she leant half fainting against him.

She seemed to feel the look with which the two men were regarding each other, for she shuddered, and slowly turned her face towards Cunliff. Then she turned it away with a sharp spasm of pain on her own, and looking at her husband, said—

“Owen, as Mr. Cunliff does not seem inclined, even in self-defence, to tell the story of my humiliation—I—I must tell it myself.”

“Catherine,” said Mr. Rhys sternly, “quiet yourself, go to your room. I will take care that Mr. Cunliff shall explain all.”

“That he will never do,” answered she.

“That he shall do before he leaves this house,” said Mr. Rhys, with extreme calmness.

“Owen,” cried Catherine, turning upon him suddenly, “do you know what you would hear of your wife—hear it from her

own lips at least—would you have *him* tell you how I have been mistaken all this time—that I alone have been guilty in all this scandal—this misery."

" You are excited, Catherine, you do not know what you are saying. Let me take you in. Come."

" Do I not know what I am saying? Look at me, Owen—look into my face and see if you think I feel it a truth or not, when I tell you that man does not love me."

She had laid her hand on her husband's arm, and was looking up at him with a despair so deep and wild, it fascinated him. He gazed down at her with a great anguish, almost forgetting Cunliff's presence. He knew she spoke the truth, and he saw what that truth cost her.

" Do you believe me?" she cried again, in a voiceless whisper. " He does not love me."

Still her husband gazed at her, and did not speak.

" He does not love me," said Catherine; "it is not for my sake he is staying here. I went to warn him this morning of your

anger, and saw who it is he is staying for, and learnt what I tell you, that he does not love me. I saw the one that he does love — I saw him with her. I saw him light-hearted and happy — while I — the sight nearly killed me — I fell down where I stood — and when I came to myself my mouth was full of earth, as if my teeth had tried to gnaw an opening to my grave. They found me, and tended, and were kind to me. I broke from them, and rode away madly in hopes some accident might happen to me before I reached you ; but you see *he* followed, and cherished and guarded me. Oh, thank him — thank him for the precious life he has saved. Oh, Owen, thank him !”

He felt the little hand relinquishing its hold upon his arm — he knew the sudden rush of strength was failing — and he had scarcely time to seize both hands, before she sank at his feet white and stiff as if in death.

He looked across her at Cunliff.

His look was simply one of dismissal — pathetic and stern. There was no fury in it — no hatred. The sword of vengeance which

CUNLIFF AGAIN VISITS DOLA' HUDOL 159

had been sharpened by one sorrow, was blunted by another.

Cunliff saw this—received the look with deep respect — bowed low and turned away.

CHAPTER XI.

HUGH'S FIRST LETTER HOME.

HIRELL did not mention to any one the scene which she had witnessed in the orchard. Cunliff discovered this soon, and wondered at her silence upon the subject.

The next day Kezia came home from a visit to Dolgarrog, and brought the news that Dola' Hudol was deserted again—that Mr. Rhys had gone on a foreign tour, and that his wife had returned to her uncle's house. Hirell looked at Cunliff when Kezia had told them of this, and their eyes met, and were withdrawn in much embarrassment. In the evening, happening to meet her as he was crossing the orchard, he said to her—

“How can I thank you for your kind considerate silence, as to what took place here yesterday?”

Hirell was standing by the little spring, near which Mrs. Rhys had lain — she had been thinking of the lovely stained face as Cunliff came towards her, and of his low passionate cry of “Catherine!” and she seemed to hear it still in the murmur of the water.

“I shall never speak of it,” she said quietly.

“You are very kind. I thank you much.” He held out his hand. To have taken it, Hirell must have extended hers over the very spot where Mrs. Rhys had fallen. Perhaps she had been standing in the dusk and listening to the water till she had grown superstitious ; for as Cunliff held out his hand she hesitated, looked down on the ground, and then up at him, with eyes sweet, sad and questioning.

“Is it worth thanks to be silent on such a matter?” she said gently.

“The best thanks of my heart.”

She did not take his hand, and he drew it back and went away from her in silence, and not without some humiliation.

Elias had been absent at the cattle fair of Dolgarrog all day, and his return was being looked for most anxiously by Hirell and Kezia, for on the dresser in a conspicuous place—that their eyes might be gladdened by the sight of it all day—was Hugh's first letter.

Even when Elias returned, it was not taken down from its place till the meal was over, and the fireside prepared as for an honoured guest, and then Elias got up and took the letter, and returning to his place, read it aloud to Hirell and Kezia.

“London, —

“DEAR BROTHER,

“I hope you will all forgive me for not writing before; I have so little time to myself, but I will manage differently in future. I will write as you wished me, regularly, and conceal nothing from you. In the first place, then, to do this I am afraid I must shock you, as I have already done Ephraim Jones, by declaring that I like, admire, and almost reverence London.”

Elias paused, and read the passage to him.

self again slowly, while Kezia and Hirell looked at him thoughtfully. He made no comment, however, but went on.

"Life here *is* life indeed. Since I came, I have seemed hardly to want food or sleep."

"Then surely he isn't well," said Kezia, anxiously; "but I beg your pardon, Elias;" and Elias continued—

"I am at the office by nine, but between that time and the time I rise, I have generally seen more than I have done in the whole course of my life at home. Then when I leave the office my real day begins. I wish I could describe to you the feeling of hope and confidence I have as I roam about by myself—as I stand on the bridges, looking at the reflection of the lamps in the river, and thinking of home—of what temptations I have to do something with this restless strength which the rich life of this place and its infinite possibilities give me. I have already some good news for you. It was only yesterday that I summoned up courage to go to Mr. —, with the letter of introduction—

recommendation, perhaps I should call it—from Mr. Rhys. I found him very stiff before he read the letter, and very kind afterwards. When we had talked a little while, chiefly about the Eisteddfod, he took me into the study, where his harp, a present from the Queen, was, and he asked me to let him hear me play. I did so. I was prepared for any roughness, any condemnation—for great musicians are proverbially eccentric—and I said to myself, if I have made a mistake, or if Mr. Rhys is mistaken in me, I shall hear it now without ceremony. I was prepared to see him laugh, sneer, anything but come to me in the simple manner he did, and tell me that his friend Owen Rhys was quite right, that my talent was very extraordinary. His extreme gentleness and quietness made me quiet while with him, but no sooner was I out of the house than it seemed as if my happiness would choke me. I whistled, hummed, walked, ran, but my excitement only increased as it grew later, and I approached nearer home. To put my finger under the door, find my latch key, and go up to my room, seemed an impossibility. I wandered

on past the house to the end of the street. It was a moonlight night, and I heard something like music. I found it was a wretched tinkling when I came to the public house at the corner of a low street, where three fellows were playing on a fiddle, flageolet, and—oh Cambria!—a harp. It was a wretched thing, but not so bad as the poor old chap who played it would have made us believe. His fingers trembled as if he had the palsy. His poor, thin face was turned over his shoulder, as if sick of his own music. Of his two companions, one looked an idiot and the other a rogue, on whose face appeared to me stamped all sorts of villainy.

“When I saw the poor creatures creeping out of the gin-shop, and out of the wretched houses down the street, and approaching to listen to this trio, I watched them to observe whether they derived from the music the comfort, or pleasure, or excitement, they seemed to expect. The air which made itself apparent to me through the discord, had a certain low, smart cunning in its turns that I cannot describe to you, but that seemed to gratify the listeners vastly, and to awaken in them

emotions, which, judging from the expressions of their faces, the antics of their hands, and feet, must have been at once ugly, wicked, and, in spite of a gleam of devilish mirth, most miserable. Elias, you will be annoyed at what I did, but you must remember how excited I was with Mr. ——'s praise, and the bright hopes that had been kindled by it, and when I saw these poor souls being played to by disease, idiotcy, and vice, each of which infused its own peculiar spirit into the music, and was reflected on the listeners' faces, I felt as if something most holy, most divine, were being desecrated, and made to lie to those who had the sorest need of its truth, its sweetness, and comfort. Music was beating, burning at my fingers' ends. Almost before I knew what I was doing, I had gently taken my place between the poor old fellow and his harp, and the ill-treated chords and I understood each other. You will laugh at my egotism, but I never enjoyed the possession of such power as I did at that moment. It was as though the spirit of all the music that had been murdered on those strings, revived and sang under my hands. I played

the 'March of the Men of Harlech.' With increasing power, excitement, and delight, I watched slouching limbs straighten slowly, and eyes lose their gin-fevered light, as if a breath of our own mountain air, borne on the music, had blown it out. They hurried, more and more of them, up the street—they crowded round me. The march to which I was calling them became to me as a march of souls—the battle as a battle against poverty, misery, and infamy.

"Oh Elias! no Cambrian chivalry ever answered to the call more readily than they. Up they came from street and alley, in rags, dirt, half-nakedness, and tinsel. At any other time I should have seen such a crowd with horror, for I had never realised the existence of such beings as I saw about me. But what could I do? whither could I lead them now that they had come? I asked myself, as I played on. My heart seemed to dissolve at the thought that they must go away no richer than they came. I stopped the march, and played our sweet 'Ar hyd y nos,' as tenderly as I could, trying, like a modern David,

to tame and comfort this wild and many-headed Saul.

“Suddenly a heavy hand fell on my shoulder, I was forced to let go the harp, and thrust unceremoniously through the crowd, and in a few minutes found myself at the door of the house where I lodge, struggling and laughing in the grasp of Ephraim Jones.

“I must stop now. It is nearly three o’clock, and while I am at that place—which something prophesies will not be for long—I must keep its hours, so now for bed. If Ephraim Jones goes down to Dolgarrog next month, about this new prayer society, I shall send you some powder for destroying rats. It is advertised everywhere here. Give my love to Hirell, and tell her not to laugh at my first bardic exploit ; and please to give Kezia my most respectful regards, and believe me, Elias, your affectionate brother,

“HUGH MORGAN.

“N.B.—In Kezia’s last letter, she tells me of every one but herself. Let her know that I have noticed this.”

Kezia looked up and coloured faintly at the

idea of being so remembered by one whom she and Hirell were regarding as the greatest hero in London. Both pairs of eyes that Elias met as he finished Hugh's letter, were so full of pride and tenderness, that he was for the moment half ashamed of the anxiety in his own.

Hugh had not said one word about his work at Tidman's office, the real business of his life, except in the hint about not long keeping to it, a hint which filled Elias with alarm.

Seeing them so proud and happy over the letter, Elias could not bear to damp their pleasure by showing them this, but took it to himself as another cross to bear in secret.

CHAPTER XII.

DOES HE STAY OR GO ?

THE intentions of his lodger concerning his winter home became a theme of anxious speculation to Elias Morgan. Would he stay with them till the spring, or would he suddenly make up his mind to go ? As far as Elias could tell, he was in a strange state of indecision. One day he would talk of sending him a certain farming book if he should be in London next month, and the next would express his intention of ascending Criba Ban in mid winter, or visiting certain waterfalls in February. He did not know what hopes, fears, and grave consultations every word of this kind caused Elias and Kezia, or he would, perhaps, have been more careful.

As Mr. Rymer paid well for his rooms, it would have been a great comfort to Elias could he have been certain of his continuing with them through the winter. But the lodger seemed resolved on not letting them enjoy any certainty on the subject.

Weeks passed and still he did not go—neither did he state or hint at any intention of staying.

When the long, cold evenings had set in and made all the little household draw closer together round the chimney place, Mr. Rymer was still there to draw his chair in with the rest.

When the first fall of snow lay on the mountains, still there he was to delight them by his delight at the soft and lovely outlines.

When the Christmas waits came round, he was still there. They heard his window open to let in the wild music—and his silver ring down merrily on the frosty ground.

On Christmas day when all at Bod Elian rose up before six, and went by starlight and lanternlight to early service at the little chapel, Mr. Rymer was among them.

When one morning after the winds had

been for many days blowing soft and sweet, Hirell ran into the house and called all to come and see a snowy, shivering, little creature—the first lamb of the new year, bleating piteously behind the black shed door—she called Mr. Rymer with the rest, for he had not gone.

When the almost perpendicular field in front of Bod Elian, to which Elias' chief care had been given, shone like an emerald shield on the breast of Moel Mawr, and began to be silvered over with daisies, he praised it with the rest, for yet he had not gone.

When the ethereal garden trees put on their faint white and green, he was still there to think how much more than ever like the apparition of a garden it looked upon the black hill side.

When the carnival of solitude had begun, and a sweet life and tumult pervaded the secret places of the hills; when the primroses gleamed like lamps along the way, and the dog-violets like little blue-hooded peasants came thronging up the mountain sides; his wandering footsteps crushed them oftener than any other—lingering still.

They lingered and seemed likely to linger ; yet, never at the beginning of the much dreaded winter had Elias Morgan wished his lodger to stay half as earnestly as he now longed for his departure.

Kezia had discovered—and shown to Elias certain cards—bearing the name of Mr. John R. Cunliff.

“ Kezia,” he said one evening entering the kitchen and looking at the young woman with a sharp, anxious glance, “ where is Hirell ?”

“ She is gone with her work to Judy Griffiths,’ ” answered Kezia.

“ I thought so,” said Elias, a gloom over-spreading his face. “ Mr. Rymer is standing at the door talking to some one.”

Judy Griffiths was the bed-ridden mother of one of Elias’ labourers, and lived in a hovel above Bod Elian.

Kezia said nothing in answer to Elias’ last statement, but bent over her knitting with a tender concern and perplexity in her eyes. Elias sat down just as he had come in from work, in his soiled clothes and wet boots. He laid his tall-crowned, beaver hat on the

table, and with his elbow on its wide brim leant his head on his hand.

"Kezia," he said, "you are right. Wherever Hirell goes he follows her, and she—have you noticed her? have you watched her? does it seem to you as it does to me, that she is not herself when he is away? Yesterday when he went to Aber, do you recollect how dull and tired she seemed all the afternoon—and then in the evening did you notice her, Kezia?"

The question was asked in a voice yearning for a denial of the thing it intimated, but Kezia's eyes looked into his as they always did, with perfect truthfulness. Her looks at this moment sorrowfully confirmed his fears, while meekly claiming to share them.

"I know she thinks a great deal of him, Elias. I used to think it was his book learning only at first that made her brighten so when he spoke—but I'm afraid now," and Kezia finished by shaking her head gently.

"He must go," said Elias. "He must go, Kezia. I must tell him so."

Elias on saying this rose and went out as he generally did when he came to any im-

portant decision ; for though seldom overruled by any of his family, he judged it best not to allow himself to be tempted by listening to their arguments.

That night Mr. Rymer received notice to leave.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FRIENDLY LETTER.

WHILE yet the annoyance of Elias's notice to leave was upon Mr. Rymer's mind, and before he had even attempted to think out the many embarrassing questions involved, he had another surprise in the shape of a letter brought by the postman, addressed—Mr. John Rymer, Dolgarrog, but with a note appended in brackets, [Enquire in the neighbourhood of the gold mines].

“ ‘Tis from Arnold! How on earth has he found me out?”

Found me out! The words seemed to mock him with their double meaning. His cheek reddened as he remembered their last interview—and the falsehood he had told his friend about Mrs. Rhys. It was with no pleasure he began the perusal of the lengthy document.

"House of Commons, 186—

"MY DEAR RYMER,

" You will wonder to see yourself thus addressed ; but your wonder will hardly be greater than mine in having so to write. Thus it happens : Our friend, Lord Bullyblow (to stick to the old name) has just been touring it through North Wales ; and he tells me that one day he came somewhat abruptly on a gentleman lying on the sward, and seemingly in a deep reverie, who started at the intrusion, and looked disturbed as he turned away. Our noble friend apologised—received a polite bow in acknowledgment—and saw nothing more of the musing solitary, except his back as he walked off. Bullyblow is great in the knowledge of backs. He swears he can tell any man whom he has once known, no matter how different or disguising the address, by the look of his back. And thus he declares the owner of *that* back was Mr. John Cunliff.

" He thought he would ask a question about the stranger at the toll-gate near ; and learned he was a gentleman who looked

after speculations in gold mines—his name Rymer.

“ He said nothing till he saw me—then swore that Rymer was Cunliff; and wanted to set me talking as to the possible meaning of such an incident.

“ I told him what you had told me ; that you were going to the Continent ; that I had never known you lie, no matter what the temptation, even if one of women, and *therefore* he must be mistaken. He hemmed and laughed, and so the matter passed off.

“ And now, old fellow, if this notion of his be true, you must let me speak my mind.

“ It is already known that something serious has occurred in the R— family. R— has again gone abroad. Mrs. R— has gone to reside with her gouty uncle ; and all this happens just after the former had returned full of honours and of years to enjoy what of life might remain in the solace of home, and the affection of one of the most charming of women.

“ And now Bullyblow seems to complete for me the story !

“ I may now also tell you that when we

talked before, I was in deep concern about this matter. I had heard more than I cared to repeat to you. I thought the abrupt hint I gave you—taken in connection with the new career I tried to open to you, might suffice to turn the tempter away. I have no notion of men preaching to one another, and so I hoped even my slight touch, as from a friend, might benefit.

“Nor shall I preach now. I only want to say to you—and now I talk to Mr. Rymer—that if you have irremediably injured this hapless lady, you are—. Well I won’t put the word in—fill the place up yourself—but by the Lord, you can’t put in one too black, too terrible, too *branding*. But no, Cunliff, I cannot—*can-not* think you so great a scoundrel! So for the present let me preserve my old faith in Cunliff, while I abuse the, I hope, imaginary villain Rymer to my heart’s content.

“There, old fellow, I have said what I felt I *must* say—and now for a different tune.

“Do you remember observing to me in our last memorable talk before your departure, that politics didn’t interest you—and your

bidding me wait till the close of the American war. ‘If,’ said you, ‘the North wins, there’ll be a tremendous shaking of the dry bones all over the world sooner or later—and then perhaps—’

“The war is over, substantially. Lee is a prisoner. The North *has* won. Already in England the dry bones *do* shake, and so we get to the highly suggestive *perhaps*.

“Jesting apart—Cunliff—*has not the time come?* Is not the era of *laissez faire*, and of expediency, and of government by ear-tickling dying or dead at last? Look around you and answer. Look at your own university, Oxford. Try, if you can, to conceive the magnitude of the change there. The boldest democratic and religious theories springing from the place that was once the very citadel of aristocratic belief, and prejudice, and routine—alike in religion and politics. In ordinary times it is through our young men all great changes come. Their as yet unspoiled faith and instinct give the necessary strength and momentum to the movements which their elders have thought out, waited, yearned, and struggled for.

“ The young men of Oxford are, I hear, on all sides, growing up in the light of new thought, in the warmth of new desires. Of course you know the sort of men I mean. Not the empty-headed fox-hunting country squires, and game preserving justices of the peace, in embryo, who make up so large a numerical proportion of the whole—but the men of mark, of ability, our future statesmen, bishops, law lords, philosophers, doctors, authors, and musicians. The men from whom these come—our mental aristocracy—are feeling the ground-swell, and being carried off their feet, intellectually speaking ; though knowing not yet in what direction to go, or to which men they should look as men who can guide.

“ Do you feel nothing responsive as I tell you this ?

“ Listen then, I am going to speak to you of something that interested me, and perhaps may interest you, particularly if that bird of evil omen, Rymer, is not just now at your elbow.

“ A dozen or so of us have been lately meeting together almost nightly, since we began to see, or fancy we saw, our time coming.

All sorts of discussions have taken place, all sorts of theories have been ventilated—most comprehensive tables of statistics duly set forth with scientific and laborious accuracy ; the phenomena of life, society, government, international relations, in the gross and in detail glanced at—and all to what end ? Why simply to muddle those of us that really did believe in and desire to see some way through so much intricate ground ; and to confirm the obstinacy of the others, who stick to the old liberal formulas—and think all that is wanted is, to perfect the structure by wider suffrage, and the ballot, etc., etc., and then to improve the end sought, the general wellbeing of society, by a few measures of practical importance in the interest of the great bulk of the people. But no reorganising, no revolutionising—only safe and steady progress. In fact, doing as we have done—perhaps a little better, perhaps a little worse, but substantially the same.

“ This last party was about to triumph, when lo, a new actor appeared in the field, and changed the fortunes of the campaign :—

" Mr. Sillman, a brother M.P., whom you must know as the most cruel torturer of an admiralty that ever a Providence, whom we must still think to be benevolent, inflicted on a first lord, this gentleman who had listened according to his wont, in silence, except when figures were in question, and then dominated alike us and them ; he now produced from his pockets, in his usual quiet penetrating undemonstrative way a paper, which he said had been put into his hands, and which he thought it might be worth while for us all to read.

" We happened to be just then in the mood to snatch at anything. Sheer despair of ourselves made us ready to welcome any interference, however unlikely, that still had the audacity to promise.

" Mr. Sillman accordingly, at our request, read the paper, of which I shall give you briefly the substance, stripped of the very striking garb it wore. In truth, Cunliff, it was wonderfully eloquent without being rhetorical. It impressed you, at every sentence, with the idea that the author was himself so deeply smitten with the force, beauty, and

significance of his own faith, as to be afraid to compromise it by the least taint of literary display or affectation.

“Speaking from memory, I cannot, if I would, give you any notion of the real power it exhibited, notwithstanding this restraint, and I would not if I could; because I want you to see the bottom of the thing at once, and then judge. I have seen enough of pretty-looking theories. So now, however much I admire the original shapes, I invariably *gut* them, and *then* I can say something about their insides.

“The leading point then is this—that a profound vice lies at the root of our method of government, and that hence flows its failure to compass the ends of government for any but a small portion of the people, even if—which the author doubts—that portion does get the benefit it thinks it gets.

“This vice is, he says, the making government a thing for aggregate society rather than a thing for individual man.”

“Hollo! What the devil’s this!” exclaimed Mr. Cunliff, stopping in his perusal

of his friend's letter, staring at it, turning the leaves over to the last page with an odd mixture of surprise, incredulity, and amusement in his face ; then settling himself with quickened interest and curiosity once more to the letter.

“ Let a man ask what is good for society, and who shall answer him ? But let him ask what is good for man, and the answer comes precise, clear, and full. The whole then comes under law.

“ What is society but a mere framework for the inclusion of so many individual men and women as compose it ? If each of these is born under good conditions of health ; is properly trained and educated ; is secured in due time the enjoyment of natural rights and privileges, such as the power to labour for adequate reward in a suitable occupation, the power to marry, to become a citizen, and to share in what then becomes the one principal business of legislation—the securing that his children shall have like, or still greater advantages ; if, he says, all these obviously necessary conditions are substantially guaran-

ted by wise, prudent, and beneficent legislation, who afterward needs to trouble himself about the fate of society ?

“ Does anybody fear that a universal state of well-being, a state freed from the cruel lotteries of life, but enriched with infinite aspirations and infinite possibilities of realising them, will prevent by force of law, ‘ good society ’ from its meetings, scandal, gossip ; or interfere in any way with those public operations which are for the public good, except to improve them ?

“ But reverse the question. Forget the individual and take care of society, and what do you see ? Why, just that which is the disgrace of every so-called civilised government—devotion of the strength and resources of the whole people to the comfort and interests of a part,—at the top of the social edifice, and neglect of the seething, miserable mass of people at the bottom — ignorant, dwelling in pig-styes, living a life of unrequited labour while they can labour, then passed on to a workhouse, which under pretence of being a place of shelter for the poor, is in fact a place for their punishment

for the crime of becoming a burden to society, the logic being as exquisite as the humanity.

"No doubt that even on the existing theory it is intended to go gradually downwards from the care of society as a whole, to care of its parts, but unluckily the way is so long to humanity and justice at the bottom, that they are never reached.

"Ask society whether it wants more schools, better systems of education, better houses or higher wages for working men, freer opportunities for the poor to rise, and it answers by plunging into a bottomless pit of averages, as though Johnson was cheered by knowing there ought to be a good school for his boy according to the figures; and as if Smith were able to keep off the ravages of hunger by having it clearly explained to him there was an exact average of two quartern loaves a day somewhere expended on him and others according to the figures.

"This was the leading point of the paper; the next was the necessity of a clean sweep among our officials. Pension them if you like to their hearts' content, but remove them,

or improvement is hopeless. No system of doing can be carried out by men who have lived on the system of not-doing. It is not merely their intellectual unfitness, or their lack of enterprise, but that the not-doing system corrupts the men engaged in it. Perpetually the evils that exist come face to face with the men who ought to deal with them—they do not—and then are driven to deny, to equivocate, and if necessary, to attack, all who see through them.

“The third and last prominent feature was the making all governments consist of an exact series of operations, where there was always with every mechanical duty to be fulfilled, an ideal aim also to be attained through the mechanism ; and lastly a man responsible for the results. *For example:*—

“Can you so govern that poor law union that the poor shall feel it is for them a real home when needed, and yet not want to stay any longer than they are obliged ?

“Can you employ the people in it so that each shall make some sensible use of such faculties as he or she has got, so as at once to lighten the burden of expense, and improve

rather than deteriorate the unfortunate inmates ?

“ Can you distinguish between the sensitive, the ordinary, and the brutal ; and that with such success in after management, that while all complaints shall be honestly heard, few or no complaints shall need to be made ?

“ Can you realise to yourself the idea of a true poor law, as intended to guard humanity at its lowest level, to be always striving to raise that level, conscious that even the most benevolent of men may feel some satisfaction when he can say : ‘ We take in all ; none can sink below this ; then if we take care of these,—firmly uphold these at all times and in all circumstances, the body and heart of the nation must be sound, and ready to be raised by a thousand different agencies, such as our illimitable wealth, and skill, and knowledge can enable us to set going ? ’

“ Such are the questions our author would ask of the future governors of our workhouses, while saying to them :—‘ You will have time, counsel, generous help, but you will succeed, or—be displaced ! ’

“ So with our prisons, hospitals, asylums,

and schools ; so with our army and navy ; so with our organisers of emigration, co-operation, and of whatever other methods may be found most potent for the lifting of the toiling poor to a state of comparative comfort and culture, when they will only be too glad to take care of themselves.

“ And the man who is over all these subordinate or local governors must be under similar conditions. He cannot prevent mismanagement, but he must be responsible for speedy and certain discovery of the mismanagement when it does occur, and for decisive remedies.

“ The law and philosophy of the whole being—the strong to take care of themselves, but the weak to be cared for with all the skill and might of the state, so that they or their children shall also grow strong.

“ Of course this opens a vast field for labour, expense, skill, courage, faith, patriotism, but promises to reward them all by the spectacle of such a people as only the eyes of a man like John Milton has ever seen. Caring for the individual is hard, but noble, and wonderfully fruitful ; caring for society

very easy,—almost as easy as the effort is contemptible and impotent.

“Such, Cunliff, was the spirit of the paper, which branched out into and dealt with all the great departments of public life and duty.

“And who was the author, think you ?

“I read with my own eyes the name at the end, and was certainly ‘dazed,’ as some old poet says.

“That name was ‘John Cunliff, aged twenty-one, under-graduate of St. John’s, Oxford !’

“Have you forgotten all this ? I hope so, for how else is one to believe you sane, staying where you now are, for such ends ?

“Cunliff, we want you. Come forth out of the Slough of Despond. We want you. I want you. I have some courage,—some small talent,—some bull-dog tenacity in holding on when I see aught to grab at, but I and all the men I know need what you only possess,—the statesman’s imagination. A quality as vital to him as to the poet—or to the natural philosopher. What are the laws, or the worlds, that a Newton’s mental eye can imagine before discovering them, (and without

which power of imagination he never would have discovered them) to the human laws, and to the human world, which wait the discovery of the statesman.

“The time is ripe. England’s material supremacy is passing away. A greater England is rising into competition across the Atlantic, and attracting the eyes of every nation on the globe. The praters cry, ‘Don’t Americanise your institutions! Don’t follow in the wake of the United States!’ But we cannot help ourselves, *while they are in advance of us*, because in all essential respects the genius as well as the blood of both nations is the same.

“But let us boldly step out. Think as they do—for oneself—and think grandly. And then where would we be? Side by side with America, at least. But I too, am English, and want—Englishman-like—more than equality of national fame and influence. Will any man dare to tell me that a nation, merely because she is big, and has got an unlimited supply of land, is *therefore* great? No. America is materially rich and comfortable through her land, but her grandeur springs from the grandeur of her aims. Let it be so

with us. Let ours be the grandeur of our ideal life. Let us make a reality of the old delusion about teaching the nations how to live. With our glorious history, our centuries of culture, our long line of illustrious men, and our possession of the wealth, skill, and material agencies requisite to develop the sublimest national career that poet or patriot ever dreamed of, let us so act that it is the Americans who shall have to croak—‘Do not, for God’s sake,—do *not* Anglicise our precious institutions !’

“Cunliff, come to us. Enter parliament, and I promise you in three years such a success—if you are not yet quite lost in indulgence—as will repay you a thousand times over whatever sacrifices you may have to make of habit or *aught else*.

“I fear you have dipped deeply into your future income; if so, I have a thousand or two at your service. Don’t be ashamed—for yourself—or troubled for me. The cotton-mills are going merrily, to the tune of a clear fifteen thousand pounds profit this year, so the beggar can afford to bleed, you see.

“Now will you come? If not—may the devil take you,—as he will.

“Yours ever,

“FRANCIS ARNOLD.”

It so happened that the close of the letter—as thus far shown—occurred on the first page of the last sheet of note-paper used, and there was no indication given of any writing beyond. Cunliff, therefore, remained in entire ignorance for some little time of a somewhat important communication which was annexed. But turning the leaves over with a kind of restless impatience, as a man will who receives an important communication, one suggestive of grave cause for doubt and anxiety, he saw a postscript over leaf, which not a little startled him.

“N.B.—I reopen this to tell you I have just seen Sir George. He is strangely altered for the worse, and is certainly breaking fast. He is conscious of the fact, and spoke of you with a kind of irritable affection, that moved me to attempt a half apology for your long absence from his house; but he became angry

and seriously ill, and quite silenced me when he spoke again, by saying, ‘O, he’ll turn up, no doubt, in his own time ! Depend upon him to pay his *last* respects to me. Haven’t I got what he wants, and which he knows I can’t keep from him,—the title and the estates.’ I think you must now take this further fact with you, that you will soon have to emerge, not merely from the Mr. Rymer, but also from the Mr. Cunliff state, and stand forth as an English baronet of great wealth, and greater responsibilities.”

In deep silence Cunliff, after a long pause, put the letter into his pocket, and went forth into the cool air to think.

An hour later he wrote to Arnold—saying he should come—that he was just able to say nothing did as yet prevent him—and now that *nothing should*.

CHAPTER XIV.

EWYN Y RHAIADR.

IN the evening of the same day on which Mr. Rymer had been requested to quit Bod Elian, and had received Arnold's letter, he heard, as he sat in his little parlour, Hirell receiving instructions concerning an errand she was to undertake for Elias on the following morning.

She was to purchase some cloth at a little cloth mill situated in a spot so famous for its beauty that few tourists go to Dolgarrog without visiting it. Mr. Rymer had not yet done so ; and when he heard them talking of it, he told himself it was a great omission to have made, and he had half a mind to go and see it yet before his departure.

He had heard them arrange that Hirell was to start early in the morning ; and, taking some oat-cake and apples in her pocket, was to eat

her dinner by the waterfalls, and to treat the day altogether as a holiday.

While they were doing this, Mr. Rymer rose, paced quietly up and down, and asked himself two questions which took him all the rest of the evening and late into the night to answer to his satisfaction.

They were these : Should he meet Hirell at Ewyn y Rhaiadr to have the understanding which he must have before leaving Wales ? And what was that understanding to be ?

What was he to say to her ?

Pausing once near the door when her sweet voice was speaking, the answer came to him almost so as to overpower him. He felt the water in his eyes ; his hands locked, while the answer was put to him in this fashion :—

Say to her ! What should he say to her but that he loved her—that he owed to her his deliverance out of a misery and despair too deep and dark for his own thoughts to look back into without growing dizzy. That he loved her, and that his love had been founded on—had grown—with all true and noble influences, radiating from her as from a centre, even when not all her own.

Ah—yes ! and were there no such things as ambition, or “good society,” through which even the noblest ambition finds itself compelled and humiliated to pass—then Hirell was for him his life’s one and only want—his most perfect ideal realized.

Yes, if he could now renounce all aims beyond those of a simple country gentleman, no scheme of happiness mortal man ever fashioned could be more full of the certainty of fruition.

Can he do that ?

Strictly examining himself, he sees and honestly confesses that he cannot. He cannot make such a sacrifice, for if he did it would fail. Whenever he does finally extricate himself from the indulgences of the past, it can only be under new temptations of a better kind, such as a career of vigorous public life may probably afford.

Arnold’s letter, and its extraordinary effect upon him, brings all to a point—to a single alternative. Hirell and a private career, or Hirell abandoned honourably for public duty.

Yet how is he to explain to her his motives ?

Can she think it enough for him to tell her

he expects to be a baronet, and the possessor of great estates ?

Or that he is ambitious, not only as before from inclination, but now also from duty and position ?

Or that he sees in Elias and her family influences from which he can never hope to extricate her, and with which it is impossible for him to enter into intimate communion ?

Or lastly, can he allege Hirell's ignorance of the world, and lack of educational culture, never thought of before ?

So John Cunliff reviews his position ; and finds unhappily that just as he begins most strongly to convince himself he must go, does he also see the extreme improbability of Hirell's mind and heart being equally open to the same conclusion from the same arguments.

" Well, what must be, must be," he cries, irritably. Thus does the Englishman cut the knot which he has busied himself in so seemingly exemplary a manner, by trying to untie. And then comes the satisfying salvo :—

" If I suffered in such a marriage and regretted it, she must suffer and regret too. Have I not seen in my own painful experi-

ence the danger of ill-assorted unions ? Let Mrs. Rhys' fate warn me, and save Hirell. I may hurt her for awhile by leaving her, but the hurt of an unhappy marriage could end only with death."

Nothing was said to Hirell that night as to the notice which had been given to Mr. Rymer. A strange feeling kept Elias silent on the subject ; and Kezia waited for him first to break the news to Hirell before she herself made any mention of it to her. So Hirell went up-stairs to bed without knowing anything about it, and slept untroubled by any of the doubts and misgivings which long kept sleep from the eyes of her father and Cunliff.

The next morning was very fine and bright, and Hirell was out earlier than usual that she might get her work done by breakfast time, and set forth on her little journey immediately afterwards.

She was in the little outhouse arranging for the comfort of her lambs, when above the noise of their bleating she heard a voice say,—

“ Hirell !”

She turned quickly towards the little window, whence it came, and saw there Mr. Rymer's face, which startled her by the extreme gravity and sadness of its look.

He smiled as he met her direct questioning glance, and said,—

“Hirell, I should like to talk with you a little this morning. I shall wait on the lawn of the burnt house below Ewyn y Rhaiadr ; will you look for me as you pass ?”

Hirell bowed her head, and said “yes,” in a low voice, and then he went quickly from the window.

Seeing that he was gone, she rose from her stooping attitude, and sat down on a bundle of straw with a great change in her face. It was very pale and profoundly thoughtful. Her hands trembled as she clasped them in her lap, and her eyes had a strange light and anguish in them.

Had Cunliff stayed and watched her he would have thought that some foreshadowing of the truth had come before her—some sad foreboding caught from his own face. But he would have conjectured falsely, for nothing of this was in Hirell's thoughts. What she

gathered from his face, and his manner of putting his request to her, was simply a confirmation of what had long been her secret belief, that this gentleman, so much above her in station, culture, and worldly advantages, loved her, and wished to make her his wife. He had chosen this day to tell her so. This, and only this, was what she drew from his face and voice when he had looked in and spoken to her through the outhouse window.

Sitting looking down upon her lambs and her sordid work, Hirell looked less like an agitated Griselda than an inspired Joan of Arc in one of her visionary trances. Her hands stroked each other as if to still their trembling ; and her eyes, full of tears, were raised to the black roof with a saintly light, but a sharp human anguish in them.

Could Cunliff have known her thoughts as to his intentions concerning her, could he have seen the prospect which she fully believed he was about to offer her, as his wife, he would have expected she should indeed be overcome by happiness, for he was not without a belief that she loved him, and the

contrast of the life she lived at Bod Elian and that which she would live as his wife was thoroughly appreciated by him. He could not have believed that the idea of a marriage with him could have been regarded by Hirell as otherwise than a great honour under any circumstances, a great happiness if she loved him as he believed she did.

He had little idea that marriage with him in his present state would be looked on by Hirell and Hirell's family as almost a crime, and therefore an impossibility. But so it was with her and them. No Capulet was ever more implacable against a Montague than Elias was prepared to be against this creedless mysterious stranger bearing a false name, should he think of such a thing as marriage with his daughter—that pure, regenerate child of God, that saint whose birth to him he regarded as the surest sign of grace his God had ever shown him. When his doubt of his own worth, his own regeneracy, was strongest he had but to look upon Hirell's beauty, and bethink himself of her great merits, to be filled again with faith—to feel that such a flower could not have pro-

ceeded from a tree meant only to be “hewn down and cast into the fire.”

Hirell, on her part, regarded the religion in which she had grown up as a sanctuary in which everything was beautiful and perfect to those whose hearts were like Elias’s strong, or like Kezia’s calm and humble ; and when she found the windows dark and the air oppressive, she blamed her own restlessness and want of peace, and humility, and steadfastness. But she loved it too well, and believed it too entirely, to think that she could live away from it. She had yearnings towards the great world beyond ; and for the poor wounded wanderer that had fallen in her way she felt much pity, and a strong desire that he might be “raised and gathered into the fold of the elect.” She tried to be better for his sake, as an inspired chorister, seeing an infidel at a cathedral door, might sing the sweeter in hopes to lure his wavering steps into the sacred place.

She saw, and with a deep delight and reverence, the many gifts he possessed with which she had never before seen any creature gifted. “If he has all this in his dark

state," she thought, "what would he be enlightened with grace like ourselves? How infinitely above me, and such as me!"

Cunliff, perhaps unconsciously, used all his powers to make her see the largeness and grandeur of *his* views as compared with hers, but succeeded only in making her see and love the mind that held them—the soul that she thought would be lost through them. Hirell tried every hour of her life so to live as to make her religion beautiful and holy in his eyes, but succeeded only in inspiring him with a sense of her own beauty and holiness.

But now, if what she expected was coming did indeed come, if he should ask her to be his wife, there must be an end to this hovering towards each other across the threshold of her faith; either he must enter ere she can depart with him, or he must be sent away and the door of redemption closed on him. She knew well he would expect her to depart with him, that his people might be her people—his God, her God; and this is what she was trying to arm her soul against. She thought that the temptation would be strong; and remembered how sweet the

tempter's voice was to her—how piteous it would be to cast away the soul for whose salvation she had thought it her peculiar mission to make hers shine.

As her lambs came bleating round her asking for their bed, which was the straw on which she sat, she stooped and fondled them, looking upwards the while as if she would remind her Maker she was, without His help, as weak as these.

At this moment came Kezia calling her to breakfast. So she rose and shook down the straw, and the little creatures lay in pretty attitudes shivering upon it, for the early morning was cold though fine, and giving promise of a warm bright day.

Hirell then went in to breakfast, and affecting haste, that her want of appetite might not be perceived, soon left the table, dressed herself, and taking leave of her father and Kezia, set out upon her journey.

During her long walk her spirit underwent many changes. At first the beauty and exhilarating freshness of the morning, as well as a sense of liberty in being abroad and having a holiday before her, made her

joyous and full of hope in spite of herself. But by degrees, as the distance between her and the burnt house at Ewyn y Rhaiadr lessened, and she remembered how soon she should be face to face with Mr. Rymer, she felt her courage die within her. She imagined, with suspended breath and tears starting to her eyes, the face, the voice, the speech she so revered and loved using their powers to press upon her an honour so dearly and so richly esteemed by her. She looked down at her old clothes, which just then seemed but as a type of the poverty and narrowness of all her life, and said to herself—"me, so poor in all things, to presume to—and he knows everything, and will think me mad." And then her poverty and ignorance, looked at as with his eyes, became very contemptible to her, almost shameful and hateful. A vision of her home swam drearily before her eyes, but in one of the fields there happened to be a single figure toiling; and her mind's eye saw the face turn and look at her. It was the face of Elias, and its patience, its vigilance, strength and faith, which, in Hirell's imagination,

were truly pourtrayed, sent all her shame away ; her step grew firm again, her eyes filled with the old saintly peace and security. She reminded herself how often she had wished for some opportunity for exercising for her creed that zeal and devotion so much commended in her ; and told herself that the hour of trial was now before her, that to-day she must either become the means of adding to the elect a great and noble soul, or by its loss, and the loss of all her earthly hopes, become a martyr whose martyrdom must be unseen by any eye but God's.

At the foot of Ewyn y Rhaiadr was a deserted house, that had been partially destroyed by fire, and stood in rich grounds ; where past culture, neglect, and nature, had made strange and picturesque work of trees, paths, parterres, and lawn.

Hirell stopped near this, and sat down on a rustic seat left before a half-circle of magnificent evergreens, growing so wild and thick as to almost hide the little walks between them. A beautiful lawn stretched away before her, towards the mountains across the valley ; some clusters of daffodils by the brim of a sheet of

water, shallow, and broad, and clear, kept a light and sparkle in the place.

She had hardly seated herself, and begun to glance nervously about her, when suddenly she heard a step in a little path near ; and, turning her head, saw Mr. Rymer coming towards her.

She sat still, but the best blood of her heart, and the best light of her soul, flew to her cheeks and eyes in acknowledgment of his presence. That form had become for her the one form, whose absence made all places alike dull. She looked at the lawn, the water, the daffodils, and thought that something must have been lifted from them at this instant—so bright, so full of exquisite meaning their beauty had become.

Yet, delicious as the change was, a sharp pang came with it. If all the beauty of the world was no longer free to her, but all locked up, and the key with him, what would life be
—if—

She dared think no more at that instant, for he stood before her holding out his hand.

She gave hers rather coldly, and he saw tears in her eyes.

It struck him that he might have brought blame upon her from Elias, for having made this appointment.

"I hope it has not caused you annoyance my having asked you to let me meet you here?" he said.

"No, it has caused me no annoyance, Mr. Rymer."

"I was afraid it had, Hirell—I thought you seemed sad."

She made no answer, and again he wondered if it were possible she had some foreboding of the truth. Perhaps she had heard he was going to leave Bod Elian.

As they rose, and went off the lawn, he said—

"Has your father told you of some talk we had yesterday, Hirell?"

"No," answered Hirell, "he has not said anything to me about it."

So her sadness was still inexplicable to him, and he was much puzzled by it as he walked beside her out of the grounds of the ruined house.

He did not feel at all inclined to begin his task, nor did he think there was need for

much haste. They had the day before them, and it was very sweet and lovely, and why should they not enjoy as much of its sweetness and beauty as they could, and let its hours, falling away one by one, like rose leaves that conceal a thorn, bring them to its sorrow by degrees ?

They were now walking by the bed of the torrent.

"And is this Ewyn y Rhaiadr ?" asked Cunliff.

"Yes, this is it," said Hirell ; "it means 'foam of the waterfall,' and was named so from the great circles of foam that are almost always to be found on it, and that you will see higher up."

They were ascending a sort of magnificent natural staircase, through whose centre rushed a stream of clear water—broken into all kinds of wild and beautiful shapes by the rocks and stones that intercepted its headlong course. It was walled—and in some places roofed over—by slender trees, growing in infinite profusion the whole way up ; and often bearing on their highest branches little patches of moss, from which grew ferns in great luxuriance

and beauty. The old, dark, cast-off garments of the trees still lay mouldering at their feet, making the fair green in which they were now dressed appear yet more faint and fair ; and the wild flowers and roots that here and there pricked through the rotten leaves looked like bits and scraps let fall by the trees in their attiring. The stream was the presiding genius of the place. To it the trees were bent, and the fairest primroses sacrificed, growing on mid-water stones, where nothing but its spray, which kept them so fresh and luminous, could ever reach them.

Through the pale net-work of new leaves the sunshine glanced quiveringly, making the water and the green glitter as with golden lightning.

Cunliff was charmed at all he saw.

“ I shall not soon forget my first walk with you, Hirell,” he said, as he held out his hand to assist her up a more steep and stony bit of ground than they had before passed. “ I have seen nothing so exquisite yet as this Ewyn y Rhaiadr.”

Hirell looked round her with less delight, though perhaps not with less appreciation

than Cunliff. To her, indeed, the place was beautiful ; but its beauty became to her as a solemn, almost an awful thing, as she felt that it was perhaps the robing and decorating of the altar where she was to sacrifice—Abraham-like—the Isaac of her heart.

Cunliff's exclamations of delight added strangely to her sadness, and she could only answer them by bowing her head gently, and turning away her eyes, that he might not see the tears in them.

They came to the rustic bridge, on one side of which was the little cloth-mill where Hirell was to buy cloth for Elias, and on the other a little saw-mill for cutting up the slender trees, that grew so abundantly on the sides of Ewyn y Rhaiadr. The saw-mill was deserted, its owner having gone to his dinner at Dolgarrog. The cloth-mill consisted of one room, where one man was at work, and singing ; and as they passed on—for Hirell decided on delaying her visit till their return homewards—the increasing force of the torrent drowned his voice, the trees hid the smoke of his little chimney, and the solitude of Ewyn y Rhaiadr but seemed the more profound for

this passing glimpse of primitive life and business.

For some little time they had both remained silent. They had never before been so thoroughly alone together, and both felt an embarrassment which made it seem impossible for them to talk on any trifling subject that might present itself. In spite of this, and in spite of Hirell's melancholy, Cunliff was inexpressibly happy. Perhaps a less selfish man would have found it impossible to be otherwise than miserable with the prospect of giving another such disappointment as he expected he would give to Hirell, when he should make known to her his intention never to see her more. But there was in Cunliff a strange power of snatching at passing gleams of happiness. He would live a gnat-like life of pleasure in a moment of sunshine, that would be scarcely perceived by senses less acute. He saw that if he had no sacrifice to make, if he were here to tell Hirell that he loved her, and to learn what he was certain he might learn if he liked, that she loved him, he saw that then this place and hour might indeed contain a joy greater and more exquisite than

he had ever before known ; that under such influence his vision would become clear, so that he could see the errors of his life, and be able to resolve upon a new one, great and true and possible. He felt that were it but thus he should find on this sweet fresh day of April that all nature was charged with a divine message to him ; that each lovely form of tree, or cascade, or glistening leaf, or bright flower were characters in a language which truth used, to woo him to her again ; to bid him cast off the stains and shackles of the world, and receive from her once more the old pure and high aspirations revived again by Hirell's unconscious touch.

Seeing that such good would certainly result from this meeting were it not for the sacrifice he had to make, and liking goodness as his purity of taste made him like most beautiful things, he allowed himself to put from his mind as much as possible all thoughts of that sacrifice ; and to enjoy Hirell's presence and the beauty of the place, and the influence of both as much as if he intended no sacrifice at all.

Hirell, when she found he still delayed

speaking in that manner in which she had all along been expecting to hear him speak, and when she saw how his face was full of happiness, began to ask herself whether he felt already assured of her love and of her acceptance, and this made her still more sad, and anxious for him to know all that was in her mind.

“Mr. Rymer,” she said, turning to him with heightened colour and eyes turned to the ground, “I am waiting anxiously to hear what it is you wished to talk to me about that made you come to meet me.”

It had cost her much effort to say this, as she believed it to be an invitation for a confession of love. She stood trembling when it was said, and her blush died away, and left her very pale.

As she spoke they were stopping beside a large stone on the bank, thickly cushioned in the moss ; and such a seat for beauty, elastic softness, and luxury, as kings might covet for a throne. Cunliff was touching it with his stick as she turned upon him and spoke so suddenly.

He remained stooping over it. She had

taken him by surprise ; he had not meant to speak yet. It had become so sweet to imagine that all was going to be well between them—that he need not say that which he knew he must say, and of which she reminded him, that he began to wish earnestly he had not to say it. He had played with what was good and true till goodness and truth began really to influence him.

For some time it had seemed to him that he was not only mounting by Hirell's side to where the air was purer, the foliage fresher, the rushing water more musical, strong, and bright, but to be attaining also heights where existence itself was larger and more joyous. It even occurred to him that in thus yielding to the influence of this love, of which neither had yet spoken, and which appeared the more wonderful, for making itself so manifest in its dumbness, it even occurred to him that he was in spirit retracing steps which he had once taken in blindness and recklessness. For in those days when he had tried to persuade himself it was his fate to love Catherine Rhys, and to win her love, he had known, though he had not paused to think of it, that

all life was but a descent, reckless, and headlong, in which the mind had grown more and more confused and dizzy—just as now, reversing the process, it became clearer and purer with the ascent.

As he stood probing the moss with his stick, he was tempted by everything noble within him to look up and answer Hirell's question by saying that he had asked her here in order to offer for her acceptance a husband, fortune, and position, in every way unworthy of her, but that by her all might be one day made more worthy.

Caution, however, was one of Cunliff's habits, and often clung to him when he would have been much better without it; for his rapid, instinctive impulses were, after all, the best part of his character, and against these caution was always busily at work, waylaying and destroying. It waylaid and held back the words he would have said to Hirell then, and suggested that to begin more guardedly would save him from committing himself one way or the other. So he answered, as he still held his stick plunged deep in the cushion of moss, and tried to shake it gently—

"You would not blame me for this delay, Hirell, if you knew how unhappy it makes me even to think of what I have to tell you."

Hirell looked puzzled. Unhappy ! What could he have to say to her that made him unhappy ? Was it possible he had already spoken to her father, and been answered as she knew he would be answered were it so. Her lips quivered, and she felt ready to cry at the thought of this, for she was woman enough to think things impossible to her father might be possible for her.

"Pray tell me, Mr. Rymer," she asked, falteringly, "pray tell me at once."

He paused a moment, then looking up at her as he stooped over the stone, said—

"Hirell, I received a letter yesterday which shows me that I must go away immediately."

Hirell heard this without much surprise. It had often been a matter of wonder to her that no business, private or public, had called him away before. She did not understand from what he said that he was going for more than a few days or weeks ; and if he loved her—if he desired to ask her that which she

was prepared to hear, she thought it natural he should do so before such an absence. While, therefore, she waited for him to go on with what he had to say, she tried hard to strengthen in her heart those resolutions she had formed as she sat in the out-house, with the little lambs bleating round her, before she started on her journey. The effort and the inward prayer with which she did this, gave to her face and form so noble and tender a grace, that Cunliff asked himself if this could indeed be her whose unfitness to share his exalted fortunes he had decided upon, and was about to prove to her. He was, too, surprised and a little saddened at the quiet way in which she had received the news of his intended departure, for it did not occur to him she regarded his absence from Bod Elian as only a temporary thing. His task was, he felt, much to his reluctance, now fairly begun, and must be proceeded with.

“ Hirell,” said he, “ I think there is enough friendship betwixt you and me for us to have made some surmise by this time as to the hopes and aims of each other’s lives. It often seems to me that, strange as I am to you in

all that concerns my past life and affairs, you are possessed by a kind of prophetic instinct that my rightful and true duty does not lie here. Tell me, Hirell, have you not felt this?"

"O, Mr. Rymer," answered Hirell, "how could I—I, so ignorant as you know I am, how could I? No, I have never thought you wrong in any one thing, but—"

"But—Hirell?"

"But the greatest thing of all—" she added, in a trembling voice.

"My abominable idleness?"

"No, no, no. Oh, I think you—I think, as you must know, so much,—Oh, so much too highly of you, to judge you in anything; and I can but honour, while I mourn, the rare self-doubt, the proud humility, which—which—"

In her earnestness her tears had risen so fast as to make it hard for her to speak—

"Which makes you," she went on, with indescribable mournfulness and tenderness, "keep so long from its place among the elect of God, a soul so surely, so plainly, showing itself by its great gifts to have been predesti-

nated to enjoy all the glory and love of His chosen ones."

Though he was very much moved by her earnestness—its simplicity, and strength, and sweetness—and by the beauty of her face in its emotion, he could not help smiling at that favourite word of her creed, "pre-destinated."

Now that she had begun to talk about religion Cunliff suddenly became conscious of her childishness and ignorance, and his own superiority.

" You must not trouble about my soul, Hirell," he said, trying to hide some of his amused contempt. " I cannot give you any comfort concerning that. If, as your people believe, all the world is given over to everlasting wrath, save those few you call the elect, depend upon it I am among the damned."

" Mr. Rymer, I entreat you not to talk so. You do not know what it is to me—you cannot."

" Well, well, Hirell! go back among your elect, and forget me. Your father, at all

events, does not want me among the chosen few."

"I do not understand you, Mr. Rymer, how strangely you speak."

"I will speak more plainly, Hirell. God knows I feel in no mood to jest. I am leaving you to-day ; your father thinks it better for us all ; perhaps he is right ; for myself, as I told you, I fear my duty does indeed lie elsewhere. I fear, too, I should forget that if I stayed here much longer."

"Then you asked me to meet you here to—"

"To bid you good-bye, Hirell, for ever."

They had continued their ascent, while the rush of water had become fiercer and fiercer, and now they had reached that spot where the falls were at their grandest ; where, as one of the poets of the country has described it,—

"Foaming and frothing from mountainous height,
Roaring like thunder the Rhaiadr falls ;
Though its silvery splendour the eye may delight,
Its fury the heart of the bravest appals ;"*

while below, one great ring of the foam

* Borrow's Translation.

which gave the place its name, perfectly round, flat, and compact, and measuring five or six feet across, was swinging about in the current.

There was a seat opposite the falls. Hirell sat down upon it, and Cunliff stood watching her. Her eyes were half closed, her lips very white. She had come prepared for martyrdom, but not of this kind. This was too hard, too bitter; there was no glory in it, nothing but shame. She had almost confessed her love to him, in her certainty that she had his. Where was the sacrifice she was to have made? What had she to sacrifice? She thought she could bring this man into the sanctuary of her creed, or be compelled, for the honour of that creed, to send him from her broken-hearted. And now, after having been cherished in sickness, and his soul watched for and prayed for so long and unceasingly, he could talk coolly of going away—for ever.

As she exerted all her energies to look up, to try and answer his farewell calmly, she found her two hands suddenly taken and held in a tender, passionate grasp.

“I did come to bid you an eternal farewell,

Hirell, but I cannot—I will not. Duty! Oh Hirell, how can I fail in that, if you will give your love, if you will be the wife of a man unworthy of you in all respects save one—his love, his reverence for you—my darling, my sweet saint!"

In the Morgan family sudden changes of purpose were so little known, that Hirell, for a moment or two after Mr. Rymer had asked her to become his wife, felt her mind much confused between that fact and the statement he had made a few minutes before, as to the necessity for their final parting.

Alarm for him, and at the thought of what he might be forgetting in his love for her, mingled with her rising joy and relief from humiliation.

Pressing his hands that held hers, and trying to look with some calmness in his face, which was just then very eloquent and nobly impassioned, she said, gently—

"Wait, wait, dear friend! You speak too hastily, too generously; wait, and let us talk of this when—when we are calmer."

That she could keep an unselfish and tender

all life was but a descent, reckless, and headlong, in which the mind had grown more and more confused and dizzy—just as now, reversing the process, it became clearer and purer with the ascent.

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permits me," said he. " Hirell you have won me."

" Ah ! am I so happy—so honoured ?"

" I take your faith, my innocent and beautiful, so far as I can, with my dim eyes, see its truth. All in it that makes my darling so sweet and true above all others, I desire to share, find it in what manner of creed I may."

" Oh, sir ! it is but the One that could have inspired me with courage to speak to you as I have spoken."

Cunliff had not intended the slightest untruth when he said those words which made Hirell feel herself the most joyful and privileged among women. Neither had he the smallest intention of becoming a Calvinistic Methodist. He had, he told himself, spoken broadly ; and when those wonderful brown eyes, suffused with tears, and fired with triumph, rested on his face, he was too jealous of his own present happiness, and hers, to undeceive her. Of course he would undeceive her ; but he must not let such a trifling matter as her religious scruples stand in the way of their happiness when he was willing to make such great sacrifices for it.

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" Pray tell me, Mr. Rymer," she asked, falteringly, " pray tell me at once."

He paused a moment, then looking up at her as he stooped over the stone, said—

" Hirell, I received a letter yesterday which shows me that I must go away immediately."

Hirell heard this without much surprise. It had often been a matter of wonder to her that no business, private or public, had called him away before. She did not understand from what he said that he was going for more than a few days or weeks ; and if he loved her—if he desired to ask her that which she

in low, delicious, clinging music, that their sense would have been missed by other ears than his, "I should have loved you, lost or saved. I should not have turned from my people, from my faith, for your sake, because it is to me as a safe chamber set apart by God for His elect, out of which I dare not go. If you had left me I should have stayed there, but I should have found it as a place hung with black, and its lights gone, and the stone hard where I must kneel, but now you are with me! I hold your hand, and instead of its being hard to me to pray, as sometimes it has been, my thoughts spring up in prayer as if they'd known no other way. Oh ! when I say I love you—I love you—do you not feel in my voice something that is not speaking to you ; a joy that cries out even in those very words to my Lord, whom your love lifts me near, so near I already feel I can defy death ? Yes, gladly, gladly die!"

A tender thrill, too vague to be called fear, made Cunliff hold her closer to his heart, and say, pleading passionately he knew not against what,—

" My life—my life !"

Besides its beauty and its perfume, the rose has another power which perhaps shares not a little in its charm. It is the thought of its evanescence which gives that inexpressible tenderness to the delight with which we regard bloom and odour—the thought of death's hand on the stem as well as the glowing flower that holds our gaze.

Cunliff, drawing Hirell to the seat, gazed into her face. Did that hand grasp the flower of *her* beauty? Would it be snatched away out of the world? Was her youth so radiant because Death was feeding it with wasteful hand from the light of years to come? No; it could not be. This sweet colour on the cheek was not the hectic flush of a day drawing near its close; but the fresh brightness of the morning sky. The wonderful hazel eyes surely had in them none of the fatal fire of too rapidly consuming life, but were full of the dewy light of health. He thought too, of her hardy life, and wondered how the idea of the loss of her could have entered his mind. Why had he felt it as a sort of prophecy of evil? Could anything but death take her

from him ; or change the heart so full of love for him ?

“ Do not let them reason you against me, my Hirell,” he said, with the same vague dread in his soul that had been there ever since she showed him her great love, and he felt its priceless value to him. “ Don’t let them persuade you that because I have lived in the world, and you out of it, that we cannot make each other happy.”

“ Do you think that might be so ?”

She raised her head and looked into his eyes with a half startled look in her own.

“ It might cause us trouble, Hirell, if we loved each other less.”

Her face was very thoughtful as her head leaned lightly against his shoulder. He looked down into it. Again the bright eyes glanced up with a shade of melancholy in them.

“ Suppose you do love me less than you think ?”

“ How can I do that when every minute I am with my darling I love her more ? Why do you speak so, Hirell—can you doubt me ?”

“ I should doubt myself—my power of

making you at all happy, if you left off loving me."

"And you think that possible, Hirell?"

She was silent. She was thinking of Mrs. Rhys—of the stained, death-smitten face by the little spring in the orchard. She had thought of her very often, but always remained silent about her. The story seemed to Hirell an easy one to guess. This lady had loved Mr. Rymer before her marriage with Hugh's patron, and he had loved her; then he had changed, and she married another, and had been unhappy, keeping in her heart her first love still. She had come to Bod Elian, and seen Mr. Rymer unexpectedly, after all these changes, and had seen him with one so unworthy to take her place in his heart; and the surprise and anguish had stricken her as they had found her. From the reports that had reached them at Bod Elian, concerning the life of the gay and fashionable mistress of Dola' Hudol, the Morgans had tacitly regarded her as one of the light daughters of Zion—with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes "walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their

feet ;"—therefore Hirell exonerated Cunliff from blame ; and the doubt that crossed her mind was not a serious one. *That* love could not have been blessed by God as surely this was.

"No," she said, with her wet lashes rising quiveringly from her cheek, "I do not believe it possible that either of us can cease to love the other."

"No earthly consideration shall part us," asserted Cunliff, as if reasoning with some real and pertinacious antagonist. "Let nothing—let no one persuade you that the differences of our previous lives shall interfere with our happiness."

"I suppose you mean that they will try to persuade me that I shall disgrace you," said Hirell, lifting her head, and looking with a sweet, half-pensive thoughtfulness on the ground. "But they cannot do that, Mr. Rymer."

"It would be strange, indeed, if they could, Hirell."

"And I would have you never doubt me until you doubt your own love for me."

"Doubt you ? In what, my Hirell ?"

“Doubt my power of fitting myself to the duties that will come to me as your wife.”

“Have I shown any such doubt?”

“You have seen me,” she interrupted him with a sweet, strong confidence in her eyes and rich tremulous voice, “you have seen me at all kinds of hard work, Mr. Rymer. It is likely you should doubt my fitness for a life so different; but”—she rose, and stood before him with the grace of a queen—“I ask you not to doubt me. I know such doubts may come. I dread them. I am not given to overrate my powers, but I do assure you that I believe with all my heart and soul that this hand that has known no other defilement than labour—that has never been a day unlifted to its Maker, can serve you faithfully in your own sight, and in the Lord’s. By the world I do not desire to be judged.”

Again Cunliff kissed the little hand most tenderly, most reverentially, answering her by a look more eloquent than any words he could have spoken. He then drew her once more closely to him, and kissed her, and felt that the betrothal was now indeed final, sacred, indissoluble.

Their happiness was deep and perfect. They sat silently, looking at the torrent, whose voice sounded thick with whispers of the great eternal joy of the new world love had opened to them.

There are times when everything near us seems to take up the story of our great happiness or sorrow, and to bear it for evermore ; meeting us with it at strange times, and in strange places. The eye that wet with joy or anguish falls on any little common flower, finds, after no matter what years, what changes, the passion of that moment in the flower still, rise up where it may. There are memories in which the pale, sweet gleam of the primrose casts too cruel a light to be looked at without tears. There are eyes to which the edges of the fresh spring daisy seem to have been crimsoned in the very blood of a lost love. There are ears for which the harebell rings with a subtle, creeping music that will not be shut out. It is as if the soul in moments of great joy escaped from its prison, and became a part of all beautiful and living things, shining in the sun, and breathing in the flower, and never gathering itself com-

pletely in its prison again, so that it often appears to us to be a more real, living, passionate self we find in these tokens of the past, than exists in the weary frame bent over them.

Hirell and Cunliff knew that the joy of these moments was being stamped on all things, sky, trees, water, flowers, never to be erased while memory lived. When the clouds in after years should look a little as they looked now, it would bring it all before them again. When the sunshine of later Aprils should fall again through tender, pale foliage, it would make the same writing on the moss that their happy eyes read now ; the water would fall, and the flowers glow with, and breathe the same story as when they sat there, young and true, feeling their spirits to be as a part of the joy and light, the tenderness and passion of the spring time.

They rose, and wandered about the place ; and Hirell's holiday sped on as fast as sunny, delicious April hours could bear it.

The time came at last—and all too quickly —when they must part ; for Cunliff had, he told her, decided on leaving Dolgarrog for

Llansaint afraid that very night, that he might be in time for the first train in the morning. Matters of great importance—about which they must talk, but not now—demanded his presence in London. He had too long neglected them. She spoke of her father, and how she should break the news to him. At the mention of this, Cunliff's eyes lost some of their joyous light, and became coldly thoughtful. He told her he would like the matter to be left in his hands. Let him tell Elias when he returned after these pressing matters of business were settled. Hirell was not surprised or grieved at the request, but pleaded against it sweetly and earnestly, and won at last a reluctant permission to tell him all.

"But don't make too much of my conversion, Hirell," he added, when he gave it.

The words did not trouble her then, because as he spoke them he was taking her hands in the parting clasp, and a strange dizziness and pain she had never known before, took all her strength to struggle against it.

"Only a few weeks, Hirell—a month at most," he promised her; but Hirell shook her

head, and begged that nothing he had to attend to might be hurried for her sake.

“With your love to think of at home, and your soul to rejoice over in the house of God, have I not happiness to content me long, long?” she said.

They had returned to the seat opposite the falls, as Cunliff was going to the town that way, and Hirell home through the grounds of the deserted house; and when he left her she sat there still for some minutes. Looking back he saw the chequered sunlight quivering on her closed eyes and pale face. It was so pale he had half a mind to return to her—but as he hesitated, he saw her slip from the seat to her knees in that devout rigid attitude which he had noticed as peculiar to the congregation of Morgan’s Chapel—and the ecstatic look upon her face made him—knowing as he did whom she rejoiced over—turn quickly and silently from the spot.

CHAPTER XV.

HARD QUESTIONS.

HIRELL reached home just as the twilight was disguising the familiar shapes of the fields round Bod Elian, and making the tops of the mountains indistinguishable.

She knew she was much later than her father and Kezia had expected her to be, and as she drew nigh a vague fear crossed her mind ; but her whole being was too full of light to let its shadow rest, and it went flitting instantly like the shade of a filmy cloud over a field of buttercups. Hirell had no half guilty trembling happiness, nor did she feel in the least abashed or shame-faced at the thought of the news she had to tell Elias. She longed to meet him ; not to hang down her head before him, and make tearful and blushing confession of her love, but to look

into his grave eyes and make them glad with the story of the grace that had been shown her. She found him sitting with Kezia in the kitchen, and saw the moment she entered that his face was more than usually care-worn, and that Kezia's eyes as she looked up were a little red. Still Hirell felt no self-reproach. She advanced towards them, her face beaming with happiness, till the voice of Elias startled her—

"So the man who calls himself John Rymer has been with you to-day."

She turned pale, and recoiled like one who had been stung. Elias sat looking at her, evidently holding great control over himself.

"Did you think to deceive me, my daughter?" he asked.

"Indeed, Hirell, this is not like you," murmured Kezia, not with any wish to reproach, but from an instinct that if another besides himself blamed Hirell, Elias might be moved to make his own blame less stern.

"O Kezia! O father!" cried Hirell, "why are you angry with me? what have I done?"

"Hush, dear Hirell," said Kezia, "you must know it was not right."

"I know that all which has happened me-to-day has been right and holy and blessed in the sight of God," Hirell said with streaming eyes, "and, father, the man of whom you speak so sternly is now rejoiced over by the angels of heaven. He is saved—he comes to us—he will be your son by marriage, and in the Lord, he will learn of you and our ministers. Ah, put no trouble in my heart this night, for it is so glad! Like Hannah and like Mary, my soul exults to think how its lowness has been regarded."

There was something so sweet and thrilling in her voice that Elias and Kezia simultaneously raised their eyes to look at her; and beheld on her face an expression so tender, so seraphic, that they withdrew their gaze quickly lest their looks of reproach should be changed to adoration.

Elias, putting his hand before his eyes, so as not to be moved by the sight of her, said in as calm and hard a voice as he could command—

"Give me simple and true explanations,

Hirell. Does this man wish you to marry him?"

"I know, father," she answered, "it is hard for you to believe that this gentleman has so honoured me; yet it is true, and is the least of the miracles that have been shown me this day."

"Then," said Elias, "John Rymer *socalled*," he added sternly, "has agreed to become a member of the Calvinistic Methodist Church."

"And through me your unworthy—your—" Her sweet voice became choked, she bent her head meekly, and let her emotion find vent in an unrestrained rush of tears.

"Why does he not come back with you, to ask for you at my hands? Why keep away like a backslider and deceiver?" asked Elias, rising.

"Oh Kezia," cried Hirell, falling upon her neck, "tell him he is coming—tell him he is true and honourable as any man living."

"Is he coming to-night?" demanded her father, sternly.

"No; he was compelled to leave to-day, but in a few weeks he will be here."

“ Why did he steal from my house like a thief, letting none know the time of his going ?”

“ He had letters, he told me ; his business was sudden.”

“ And of more importance than the consecration of the soul he has, you say, newly given to God ; or, than his marriage with you ?”

“ Indeed, Kezia, my father should understand he is not as other men—he has great matters on his mind.”

“ So has Satan,” groaned Elias internally ; but aloud he said — “ Why did he sojourn with us under a feigned name ?”

Hirell raised her head from Kezia’s shoulder and looked at her father with parted lip and dilated eyes.

“ Feigned ! *his* name ! O father !”

“ I have said it,” answered Elias coldly, returning her look.

“ May I ask how ?—what makes you believe this ?”

“ Kezia knows—let her say.”

“ I found in his room, Hirell, cards with the names he bears, and another added—

John R. Cunliff," answered Kezia, kissing the pale cheek turned attentively towards her.

"Is that all?—that may be the name of a relative."

"Can you so easily deceive yourself, Hirell?" asked Elias.

"Could he so cruelly deceive me? No. I tell you, father, no. Be careful, dear father, and Kezia, what is true must be known and—and—borne—but—oh! oh!"

She broke from Kezia and stood alone, her arms crossed tightly on her breast, her form swaying like a slender mountain tree in a cruel tempest, and then, laying one hand on her father's wrist, and the other on Kezia's, she said—

"But oh, it would be more charitable in both of you to desire to see my death—my death—than the breaking of my trust in this man."

Alarmed at her passionate manner, so unusual, so strange to her, Kezia gently stroked the hand that burned and trembled on her wrist. Elias looked down helplessly at that which lay on his, and dropping it, said:

"Has it, then, gone so deep with you, Hirell?"

"Deep as life."

"And you desire to walk with your eyes blindfolded?"

"No, only to walk in faith. I love him. What is love without faith? I will trust him. When the words of his own lips defile him, then only will I doubt. Let me believe till then—*then*, which means always."

She said the last words with a smile breaking round her lips, and in a tone at once strong and tremulous with happy trust.

"Go then," said Elias, not unkindly, "I will not reason with you more to-night. Go to your room, Hirell, subdue passion, pray for wisdom, 'commune with your own heart and be still.'"

"Good night, my father."

"Good night."

"Good night, Kezia," she said, and the embrace she dared not give to her stern-eyed father she pressed with unwonted tenderness on the gentle housekeeper—holding her in her arms, and clinging to her as a child to a mother.

"Dear—God bless you," whispered Kezia, and gave her a candle, and Hirell took it and went out.

Turning towards Elias, Kezia saw he was watching his daughter from the room with eyes in which was a mixture of great tenderness and anger.

"Bright spirit!" he said, still looking at the door by which she had gone out, his hard voice broken, "if this man prove false, may her purity and faith be made the fire by which his God shall scathe him. As to my wrath—God deal with it, God deal with it!"

CHAPTER XVI.

KEZIA TURNS PERVERSE.

THOUGH Elias had been suffering all that day a most tormenting anxiety concerning Hirell, after hearing that his lodger had been seen to take the road to Ewyn y Rhaiadr about half an hour before she started, it was to cares of another kind that the clouded looks on his face, and the red eyes of Kezia noticed by Hirell as she came in, were due.

It was now about six months since Hugh Morgan had entrusted to Elias the secret of his love for Kezia. The confidence reposed in him, as well as the absence and poverty of the young man, made Elias regard it as his sacred duty to influence Kezia in his favour as much as he possibly could. During this six months Hugh had not fulfilled his promise about writing home regularly and acquainting his family with all that happened him.

His letters were few and arrived irregularly —were sometimes utterly despairing, sometimes wildly sanguine. At first they generally contained half tender, half bantering messages to Kezia, and Elias invariably read them to her, she listening with the simple affectionate pleasure of one unexpectedly remembered.

In the last three or four, however, Elias had come upon certain passages which he had felt obliged to evade reading aloud. Hugh complained of never hearing anything about Kezia; she must speak of him sometimes; surely Elias might give him more comfort than he did concerning her; or if she had no regard for him at all would it not be kinder in his brother to tell him the truth at once? Then perhaps the next letter would contain a passionate avowal of his incapability of living without hope of her acceptance; and so the elder brother was loaded by more and more perplexities and care.

He thought the time had now come for him to acquaint Kezia with the truth, and learn the state of her mind towards Hugh. He had been kept from doing this before, partly by the

wish his brother had expressed on leaving home that she should not be told till he had done something to give her faith in him ; and partly because Elias was haunted by the fear that Kezia would not receive the announcement as Hugh expected she would.

Hirell's absence seemed to offer a good opportunity for Elias to speak to her ; and as soon as the most pressing business of the morning was seen to, he came home with the intention of requesting her presence in the little parlour, where all interviews or consultations of any importance in the family were invariably held.

It revealed a strange perversity in the mind of Elias Morgan that though he saw Kezia alone in the kitchen, and everything most favourable to his purpose, he turned away from the door, and came back to it no less than three times, before he spoke the words he intended to say.

The first time he paused on the threshold, as if in reluctance to sully the floor with his muddy boots, for the kitchen was in a state of cold, polished cleanliness. The beam hooks, once so plentifully stored, were now almost

empty ; the fire had been let out till the time for cooking the men's dinner ; the gaunt chairs were drawn up to their places, and on one of them near the open window, looking small in the great brown chamber, and solitary, and primitive, was Kezia. She wore a print gown which had once been a bright puce colour, but which age and frequent washing had faded to the pretty faint hue of the dog violets on the mountains. On the fresh-scoured table before her was the scant stock of linen she had just been gathering from the hedges where it had been spread to dry, and which she was now mending. The place smelt sweetly of it, and of the little spray of cherry blossom she had brought in with it and placed on the open leaves of her hymn book that lay before her. The side of her face was towards the door, and the line of her hair as it went from the centre of her low forehead, and over her small fair ear, to the thick plaits behind, undulated in pretty waves, which gave her profile a richness that almost turned its simplicity into beauty. Her eyes bent over her work and her lips apart, as she sang in the low somewhat monotonous tone of a person having

no faith in her own vocal powers, but who sings from an overflow of peace and contentment.

She looked up as the footsteps of Elias crossed the hall and came to the door, but seeing that he only stood looking on the floor in a sternly contemplative manner, went on with her work, taking no further notice of his presence. He then, after pausing a moment or two, went up-stairs to his own room, and presently reappeared on the threshold of the kitchen in the clothes he usually put on when his hard out-of-door work was over.

This time he fixed his eyes on the clock, as if he had come there merely to consult that. Then he went away as far as the house door, and Kezia thought he was going out; but the next moment his form again stood in the doorway of the kitchen.

“Kezia?”

The soft, peaceful eyes looked up inquiringly.

“Will you come into my room. There is a matter on which I have to speak with you.”

“Surely—Elias.”

She rose and followed him.

Elias went to his bureau, and took out the

well-known packet of Hugh's letters. From these he selected four.

"Sit down, Kezia, and read those."

She thought his voice and manner peculiar, and, looking at him anxiously as she received the letter, said—

"There's nothing wrong with the lad, Elias, is there?"

He sat down, holding the packet in both his hands, and answered gently—

"Read, Kezia."

She began to read the letters in the order they were given to her.

The first one was written when Hugh's enthusiasm for London had experienced a sudden revulsion. All now was as poor, mean, and hopeless as before all had been rich, alluring, infinite. His musical friend, having raised his hopes by the very highest of praise, considered his duty towards him done, and left him to his own resources. Thus his happiness was made to depend solely on the manner in which he performed his business at Tidman's, and on his office companions, both of which he described as becoming more and more distasteful to him.

" You ask me, Elias," he wrote, " if I have made any friends among my fellow-clerks yet. Lonely as I am, I am thankful to answer ' no ' to that. I wonder what you would think of them—their views—their conversation—the intense meanness of their lives and aims—the way they speak of women, as if they had never known a mother or sister, or any but the wretchedly artificial fast-looking creatures I meet them with at theatres and some of the concerts. Elias, how inexpressibly dear and angelic the image that is always with me grows by such a contrast. Sometimes I wish she knew. You might say more about her than you have done lately. I am afraid you are not able to give me much hope, as you carefully avoid saying anything about her whenever you can."

Here the letter finished with the usual messages to each. Kezia had heard it all before, except this last passage. Folding the letter, and handing it to Elias, she asked, with deepening colour—

" Who is it he means, Elias—the image that is always with him? I do not understand."

"Take the next—perhaps you will understand that better," was the answer—and Kezia took up the next with a trembling hand.

This one she remembered well. It had touched them all deeply—for in it Hugh told—with a generous regret for his former hasty judgment—of the great goodness that in many instances lay behind the outward vulgarity and disagreeableness of his fellow clerks. He told them how one whom he had laughed at for his effeminacy—who had a nervous horror of thieves, cattle, dogs, and draughts, was, by his persistent labours to support a wife and seven children, in spite of the encroachments of a deadly and painful disease, proving himself a miracle of courage and heroic strength. He told them how another whom he had before described as utterly selfish, was capable of an act of such self-abnegation as breaking off his engagement to the woman he loved, in order to devote himself to the support of his newly-widowed mother and young sisters. "Let them appear as common-place, vulgar, apathetic, cowardly as they please," Hugh wrote, "they cannot deceive me longer, or incite me to self-glorification. I know there is

in this office as much delicate sentiment, refined sense of honour, and chivalrous bravery, as ever existed in the olden times, among the same number of men. What becomes of all the old ledgers, I wonder, when they are full, and done with? It seems to me there are histories in those long lines of figures which should be read and treasured when ‘The House’ whose accounts they contained, is no more.

“You must all have thought me very rambling and unsuccessful since I came here—but strange to say, something has been growing in my mind which my very mistakes have helped to enrich. It is a new adaptation of Kezia’s favourite air, one I find quite unknown here—it is wonderful to me how it has ‘come to me’—or, as Ephraim Jones would say, ‘been borne in upon me.’ I find myself able to work at it really steadily and progressively. You may be sure that I find my work all the pleasanter for remembering who used to sing it. Oh, Elias, if I could but come home and see her—how it would refresh me after all I have passed through here? Tell her—but no, I cannot send the usual message.

Let her think, I have forgotten to mention her in this, and tell me what she says. Love to Hirell.

“Your affectionate brother,
“HUGH MORGAN.”

Kezia kept the letter in her fingers a minute after she had read it.

Elias took it from her, and gently placed another in her hand.

This was the most eventful one that had been received from Hugh since his departure. It contained the joyful news that his song was accepted by a well known publisher, who thought it would have a great success, but he wanted words to it. Hugh knew that his brother's lodger was the author of several anonymous poems, of some power and grace. Did Elias think he would write a song of the character of the enclosed description? From some conversation Hugh had had with him during their brief acquaintance, Hugh thought it likely Mr. Rymer might be pleased with the idea he suggested for the poem. “And now,” he wrote, “if, Elias, you think as I do, that this is the foundation of a great prosperity and

success, you may tell Kezia how long and how deeply I have loved her ; but if you still doubt me, I am willing to wait till I have still stronger evidence to convince you I am worthy to be trusted with one so dear to us all."

Kezia laid this letter down, and rose with wet eyes and burning cheeks.

"I understand what you would have me know, Elias Morgan," she said, "need I read more ?"

"Yes, Kezia, read that ;" and he gave her the fourth and last of the letters he had selected from the packet.

This was written after the brilliant success of his song, to which the desired verses had been written by Rymer.

"Of course I have thrown up my situation at Tidman's ; it would be sheer nonsense to stay there. My plans are not yet quite settled. I shall write again in a day or two. I was certainly surprised you did not speak to Kezia as I wished, upon receiving my last. I shall begin to think, Elias, if you still show such reluctance to let her know the truth, that I am but a poor, miserable fellow, with

all my success—I mean that you feel there is no hope for me. It would certainly be better for me to know the worst."

This was the last letter Elias had received from him, and a month had elapsed since its arrival.

Kezia had read it standing.

"O what a pity this is, Elias ; what a great, great pity," she said in a trembling voice, without looking up from the letter.

"You will be his wife, Kezia—you will make him happy ;" said Elias, in a tone half entreating, half authoritative.

He heard her tears pattering on the letter, but her head was unusually erect, her cheek very bright and hot.

He walked to the other end of the room and back, then said to her again,

"You will be his wife, Kezia ? You will let me write to-day and set his heart at rest ?"

The letter rustled in her hands, then fluttered to the floor, and she turned slowly, holding the edge of the table.

"Elias Morgan, do not ask me that again.

I am sorry—no one could be more sorry—but never ask me again!"

They stood looking in each other's faces, and there was a strange light in the eyes of Elias that might have been taken for a gleam of intense joy, but that as he spoke his voice was so harsh and measured.

"And do you know, Kezia, that he looks to me to win you for him—to give you to him?"

"That you cannot do."

"You say it, Kezia, I cannot;" he said, with a strange passion in his voice and eyes. "If you will not, how can I force you? Had I, like the patriarchs of old, full power over all my house, I would command you to marry him—The Lord be my witness, I would command you to marry him!"

"And it would be the first command of yours, Elias, that——"

She had gone to the door, and now, without finishing her sentence, glided out gently.

They did not meet again till evening, and then not a word was said till Hirell's return.

When Kezia, some time after Hirell, went up to bed, she took from an old box of hers a

little packet, and sat down with it in her lap before her bare, blindless window, which showed, through its small square panes, the April stars and moon. Kezia opened the paper with trembling fingers. Soon there glittered in them a plain gold ring ; and where it had lain, words were traced—too faintly for her to see by the moonlight but that she knew them as well as she knew her own name.

“ I leave this, my wedding ring, to Kezia Williams, my death-bed comforter and friend, whom I earnestly desire one day to take my place as my husband’s wife and my daughter’s mother, with the blessing of her who shall have gone before to dwell with her Saviour.”

Kezia looked at the faint lines, and laid back the ring, saying softly—

“ Mary, Mary ! it is over !”

CHAPTER XVII.

THE REVEREND EPHRAIM JONES SENDS EVIL NEWS.

THE next morning Elias received the following letter from the Reverend Ephraim Jones.

“DEAR FRIEND,

“Your brother has given great dissatisfaction at Tidman’s by his negligence during the last few weeks of his being there, and by his leaving suddenly without any reasonable warning. He seems, by his manner of dress and living, to be prosperous ; but I warn you he is among evil companions. You will do wisely to order him home at any cost.

“Yours truly,

“EPHRAIM JONES.”

Elias never thought of questioning the ad-

visability of carrying out his old friend's advice. He wrote commanding Hugh to come home instantly.

His trouble seemed indeed thickening round him. The spring days lengthened in care for him, as well as in light and beauty.

Kezia was cold and timid, and had ceased to sing over her work. Hirell loved to spend the fine sweet days out of doors, roaming alone in a wild bird-like joyousness that made the fearful heart of Elias tremble for her. Could the man who caused her happiness be honest, when he had never yet even written to him?

From morning till night he waited in unutterable anxiety for Hugh, or for some news of him. Days—weeks passed, and neither came.

And now another began to turn her eyes down the road with him, and to watch and long as he watched and longed.

Hirell told no one that the time of her lover's absence was longer, much longer than he had said it should be; but her father and Kezia knew it, and watched her with increasing pain.

Unable to endure any longer the suspense about his brother, Elias wrote again to the minister entreating him to seek Hugh, and learn why he did not come home or answer his letter.

The reply came the third day after the letter had been dispatched.

“DEAR FRIEND,

“I have news which will need all your fortitude. Hugh has left his lodgings, and gone none seem to know where. He stole from the house in the night—being deeply in debt there and in the neighbourhood.

“Yours in tribulation,

“EPHRAIM JONES.”

The women sobbed aloud. Elias remained in a stupor for a few minutes, then rose and began making preparation for a journey.

Hirell went after him.

“O father, what shall you do?”

“Sell the horse, and go to London to seek him,” answered Elias.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE IRONY OF FORTUNE.

CUNLIFF again sits in his London room overlooking the park—a water-colour drawing of Welsh scenery, just purchased, occupies the place which the Raphael photograph occupied when first he was introduced in this story—outwardly all things else remain the same—the pictures, furniture, writing-desk, the conservatory, newly-furnished, and bright with the floral brightness of May—all look so like what they did last September, that it is difficult to believe that the owner has passed through so much mental and other experience : even his very look, gestures, and attitude, at times seem to recal the hesitation and conflict he felt on that momentous and evil day, when he wrote his letter to Mrs. Rhys, and waited for her answer.

Yet in spite of the exterior resemblances, it is impossible to study him with attention, and not see that he, at least, is changed. The brightness and perfume of the conservatory—which only seem to concentrate the brightness and sweetness of the lovely morning outside into a focus—seem also to have entered into Cunliff. His step is springy, in spite of a certain sedate and compelled gravity ; his grey eye glances to and fro with a quick suddenness of apprehension, and with a sort of eager joyous light ; his head is thrown back proudly and haughtily, if for the moment unpleasant recollections cross his mental vision ; and in his work—for he is very busy—there is none of that obvious concentration upon a single secret thought and aim, which so characterised him on the day that began for him events and influences, the end of which is not yet. Whatever secret thought may now perplex him, it certainly does not injure his activity in dealing with all sorts of affairs.

By his side lies the rough draft of an address to the electors of —. Through Arnold's influence, a very old member of the

House of Commons has delayed till now an intended resignation, in order that Cunliff might step in, as he stepped out. The writ for a new election will be issued to-morrow. The old member's printed address, not yet made public, hangs on the back of a chair ; and Cunliff glances at it now and then while reading and correcting his own composition, which at last pleases him sufficiently to be dismissed. He folds it up, sends it, with a genial letter of thanks, to the aged M.P., and as he drops it into the letter box, thinks—

“ The further one sees—and the deeper one hopes to go down to the root of things for social and political remedies—the more necessary is it to give the silly world the notion that your fault is over-timidity ; your defect—unwillingness to acknowledge the necessity for changes too soon. Establish the right character, and then you may lead the world :—to the devil—or a good long way in the opposite direction. I wonder whether my cautious speaking will bother Arnold ? No, I think not ; though he adopts the very opposite course—and is so frank

and generous that he seems always ready to go anywhere and with anybody, till the push comes, and then uses his character to moderate, and do only just what he likes. Still, a fine fellow, and as little of a self-seeker as any of us are likely to be."

This business over—was in a minute utterly forgotten. Drafts of leases were brought forth, with accompanying lawyers' letters, and read with such scrupulous care, that one might have fancied the reader's daily bread depended on his judgment and accuracy. Then a few words were written on the back, which told exactly the state of the landlord's mind—which agents and tenants already knew, was a mind that changed not.

These things dealt with, a batch of the letters of the morning were answered—some by a contemptuous "pish!"—some by a silent thoughtful drop into the waste paper-basket—and some by a few kindly and generous written words—including, in two instances, a cheque in each letter. The batch was what may vulgarly be called begging letters—though Cunliff himself had so much of the generosity of the gentleman in him, that

he would not for the world have applied that epithet to some of the many he had gone through.

Between all this hard work, Cunliff frequently paused, in an inexplicable manner, as though suddenly forgetting the very sentence he had been reading or writing—and stared fixedly right opposite at the wall, for perhaps half a minute, his face grave, almost sad—and before resuming work, he invariably, though with no sort of consciousness, allowed his eyes to rest on that water colour in front of his desk, which represented a bit of wild Welsh scenery—one that he had never seen, but which seemed to him to be as familiar in all its characteristics, as if he had lived in it from a boy.

A double tap at the door roused him from one of those odd reveries, which began to recur more and more frequently as the long array of work began visibly to lessen.

“Come in!” he said, with an uninterested voice and manner.

The door opened, and closed again behind Cunliff—and there was silence—and then forgetfulness—and the busy pen and busier

thoughts moved on with renewed impetus—till a low and very respectful cough made Cunliff suddenly turn round, chair and all, when he saw his agent, Mr. Jarman, bowing more obsequiously than ever, even while still allowing some sort of half-grown spirit of independence to assert itself by his look.

“Jarman, my good fellow, what on earth made you stand there, as if suddenly stricken with palsy ? I thought it was the servant who knocked, and I forgot all about him.”

He stretched out his hand, and shook the agent’s cordially—and then the two set to work together, in a somewhat remarkable fashion. Cunliff handed paper after paper—lease after lease—document after document—one at a time—in solemn silence to Jarman ; who looked at the remarks written on the back, gravely inclined his head, took possession, and held out his hand for the next : only twice stopping to put now a query and now an objection :—the objection was recognised, and the endorsement altered ; the query answered to Mr. Jarman’s entire satisfaction—and so no more. When the whole of the pending matters were thus disposed of—and

some of them involved matters of life or death, pecuniarily speaking, to tenants and others, Cunliff said,

“Have we done?”

“Yes, Sir John, I—I think so.”

Cunliff noticed the hesitation, and a certain darkening of the agent’s face ; and moved by some secret misgiving, hesitated to do as he ordinarily did—dash at it, and demand to know its meaning—but said :

“Because after you have done—*after*, I say, you have quite done—I want to speak to you about one or two matters demanding your instant and most careful attention.”

Mr. Jarman’s eyes, that had scanned boldly enough his employer’s face, now bent down towards his feet ; and there was a moment of awkward delay, from which the agent suddenly extricated himself by saying in a low perturbed tone—

“She’s dead !”

“She ? Who ? Good God ! who can you mean ? Don’t keep me in suspense. Not—”

Hirell—he was about to say—till the full force of the revelation contained in the mere utterance of the name struck him, and he was

silent—gazing sternly yet anxiously on Jarman's face.

"The wife of that man, Sir John, who was so long ill in the cottage at—"

Cunliff waved his hand impatiently,—he needed to know no more. He remembered only too vividly that incident of his mad pursuit of Mrs. Rhys—when the man with his dirty hooked fingers hung on to the window of the railway carriage, talking to the doctor, and threatening Jarman.

Cunliff rose, and with an impassive face, observed—

"I have forgotten something," and left the apartment.

He returned in a minute or two, with a paper in his hand.

"That, I think, was your plan for the repair or rebuilding of those cottages. Put the matter in hand at once, and let me hear they are done within the shortest possible time."

Mr. Jarman bowed, but to Cunliff's discomfort would say something more.

"I think, Sir John, you ought to know that a coroner's inquest has sat—"

Cunliff glared at his agent—but the agent went on—

“And it came out that the woman had heart disease; and—and—the jury attributed her death to that; and—that’s all, Sir John.”

There was a moment or two of significant silence, during which Cunliff could not but reflect on that irony of Fortune which here and now should have brought to his recollection the warning he had previously received in the same place and from the same lips.

Then he turned, and with a genial, almost friendly look, that was full of meaning, he said in low tones :

“Mr. Jarman, I thank you.”

They had a glass or two of wine together, and the agent fancied it was not only in compliment to him, but that Sir John himself felt the energy of his will shaken for the moment, and wisely enough paused for recovery.

“Jarman,” and he now spoke as friend might speak to friend, while the grey, bright, piercing eyes glanced again at the water colour, “I want to ask you a favour—to do

some things for me, not in the formal spirit of business, but—”

“ I understand, Sir John,” said Mr. Jarman, with a sort of grateful smile lighting up his whole countenance, and reddening his complexion to the very roots of his hair, “ and feel myself more honoured than I can easily express.”

Cunliff then, in a few words, and without any sort of preliminary or accompanying explanation, told the story which Robert Chamberlayne had told to him on their first meeting, of the Morgans’ supposed fortune ; and then of the bursting of the bubble, and its consequences to the “ Morgans,” who were permitted to be known to the agent only through the individuality of Elias.

“ It’s a cruel position. He is in debt which he cannot pay, except through long years of exhausting labour and anxiety. But he will take nothing from my friend Chamberlayne, therefore I, a stranger, cannot hope he will take anything from me. A sort of fanatic of independence, goodness, and piety ; but, after all, a good sort of fellow enough at the bottom. I *can* aid him, if only you will undertake for

the way. My notion is that some debtor of the bankruptcy concern in years gone by, who has since grown rich, may by accident hear of the Morgans' misfortune, and offer to send a sum of money, on the understanding that it is to be devoted exclusively to the use of the family. I see the difficulties, and improbabilities, but I want it done."

"Exactly, Sir John!" said the agent thoughtfully.

"And it'll be no good unless it's so well done, that no one can get behind the pretences to see the real actors."

"I will do my best."

"Don't say that, or I must give the thing up. Say you *will* do it, and I'll leave the whole in your hands,—sure of your tact, skill, and secrecy."

"I will do it, Sir John. Already I see how to improve on your idea. I *think* I can make the offer to Elias seem *bond fide*—a something due; and I am *sure* I can keep off all suspicion from you or me, by acting through my own solicitors, who will then act through other solicitors, on whom we may all rely."

"Very good. Mind, it is not now done, therefore I cannot now know it is done. When it is done, I wish to hear nothing about it; therefore I shall still know nothing. You understand?"

"Perfectly, Sir John."

"This to me is serious—I mean for the family's sake."

"And to what extent——?"

"Just so far as you can go without exciting suspicion."

"Would a capital realizing an income of a hundred a year be——?"

"No! Too much to be believed. Five hundred in all would set Elias on his legs, and enable him to take a larger farm. And let it be in the funds, so that if the acceptance be once got over, the recipient will be sure of the value of what he gets. If I know Elias rightly——"

"You do know him then, Sir John?" thoughtlessly interrupted Mr. Jarman.

Cunliff's reply was only by a look; one, however, that considerably disturbed the agent, who felt he had been an ass to let out such a womanish bit of gossip or curiosity.

"If I know Elias Morgan rightly," Cunliff repeated, "he will never use the bulk of the money, but keep it as a safeguard for—for the future. I wish you a very good morning, Mr. Jarman."

"Good morning, Sir John."

They shook hands, and Cunliff accompanied his agent with unusual ceremony down stairs to the very door leading to the street. There he said,—

"Can you go to-day about this business?"

"Instantly! nor will I let it alone till it is quite accomplished."

He descended the steps, bowed, and turned.

"Jarman!" was called after him.

"I thought there was something else. Can you manage within a week from this time to be at my late uncle's place?"

"Certainly, Sir John."

"Say this day week—Monday."

"Yes."

"I have an odd fancy to walk through the place alone, or possibly with a friend; could you"—here some person passed by, and Cunliff whispered low into the agent's ear a few words, which, to make sure of their being exactly understood, he repeated.

Mr. Jarman bowed, did not again look in his employer's face, but said,

"Everything shall be, Sir John, as you wish."

And then they separated.

Cunliff returned to his desk, but strange to say all his old self-dissatisfaction seemed to have suddenly returned upon him, and with it all his old irritability.

He could no longer work, but paced to and fro in gloomy reverie, uttering now and then an angry or impatient exclamation, and making as if he would renew his labours, but after two or three ineffectual efforts, he gave up the attempt, saying to himself,

"No, no ; the matter must be fought out now once for all. Delay will only deepen the difficulty, till it becomes insurmountable. Fool that I was, and am ! What on earth must she be thinking about my prolonged absence and silence ?

"And Arnold ! He must put a new ingredient into this devil's broth which Fate a second time with her infernal irony, seems to commend to my lips."

He took up a letter that had been laid aside from the others after a first hasty perusal, and read a second time a certain passage in it. He read it slowly—very slowly—as if to give himself time to branch out in thought in any direction he liked as he read.

"Shall I tell you something that almost exposes me to a charge of breach of faith, and against one of the most charming of women—my cousin, Miss Harrington? She was asked her opinion of you, not by me, trust me, but by one who had a right to say what he pleased to her—her grandfather. I was present. 'Sir John Cunliff,' she said—but, no, on further consideration, I will not tell you. You are already one of the vainest of men, and my telling you may spoil her telling you when you ask her, as I hope you will. Cunliff, my friend, one serious word with you. No man ever really settles to any worthy labours after a life like yours, till he marries. When a man like you does marry, his whole future is to a large extent in the hands of his wife. You must not only love your wife's person and heart, but you must honour her intellect

and character. There must be sympathy between you. Cunliff, I will tell you what I have never before spoken of to mortal man. That I am what I am, I owe to my wife. Spare your sarcasm, it is out of place. I know God gave me little of original personal gift, but she has helped me to make the best of what he did give ; and in no spirit of vanity or conceit do I say I am satisfied as regards myself ; I am happy, as a reasonable man expects to be, and grateful alike to God and to her. You are too shrewd not to understand what all this means. If you like Miss Harrington, as I fancy you do, pray attend to her a bit, study her, and, my life on it, you will thank me for the hint. I shall not for a moment use my privilege as a cousin, or my knowledge of her thus obtained to extol her virtue, her talent, beauty, or accomplishments, because you of all men are the one to take nothing in trust, but, to judge from your own independent point of view. Still less do I feel inclined to speak of mere worldly advantages, or the powerful political influence her relatives could and would exercise in behalf of one they esteemed worthy of her.

But this slight remark may be ventured I hope without offence. Were you to marry my cousin, and take your position as one of England's future statesmen, I know no woman in all my circle of acquaintances who would be so fit as she to grace your every conquest, or smooth over your every difficulty by her exquisite tact, and perfect knowledge and estimate of all those social influences which play so large though unacknowledged a part in our public life. Forgive this plain speaking, if it offend you I shall never certainly repeat the offence."

The letter was laid down with a sort of tender and respectful care ; and the man to whom it was addressed sat with it before him on the desk, his head supported on his elbows, till a sudden and seemingly accidental remembrance, suggested, perhaps, by the water colour, made him start as if stung, rise, turn, and lay the water colour flat on the table, and then again pace about the room in deep brooding anxiety.

Yes, John Cunliff was feeling deeply now the cruel irony of fortune, which brought

him a second time in the same place, without a single admonitory warning beforehand, to deliberate on certain matters, while even now the deliberation itself was a something so disgraceful he could not courageously face it, or truthfully and frankly characterize it.

“At least, whatever I do, she shall see I do not fear to meet her. I think I can trust myself. The world—my best compliments to it!—has in a few weeks once more taught me, I think, the lesson I have been so near forgetting—to take care of myself.

“And will she too take care of herself? It is calumny to doubt it. From her spiritual elevation—it is childish to pursue the thought. It is I who have to fear; and my safety must come out of my full knowledge of that fact beforehand. Yes, I plunge, and hesitate no more.”

Again retracing the old ground, past Shrewsbury, past the spot where Chamberlayne jumped in so unceremoniously, past his own bare-looking fields, which the young farmer had so condemned, past the station where that tenant of his had hung on to the

window ; past the precise spot—how well he knew it—where he had looked out of the other window while Robert Chamberlayne was wanting to know the name of the landlord who then dealt out for a weekly rent, disease, misery, and, since then, death ; all this he now vividly remembered, but somehow found his chief consolation in the fact that it was he who had faced doctor and querist, and silenced them by his answer—“Cunliff.”

When he arrived at Dolgarrog, and made arrangement to stay the night at the new hotel, his old recollection and perplexity returned upon him, and he sat brooding over the fire in the coffee-room hour after hour as if he had come to Wales with no other purpose. At last his friend, and landlord of the Council House, having heard of his arrival, came in to him full of Elias Morgan’s trouble, and his journey to town in search of Hugh.

Cunliff’s hesitation was now at an end. He immediately gave orders for a car to be made ready for him at half past five o’clock the next morning, to take him to Capel Illtyd.

Before it was announced, he had already breakfasted, and for many minutes paced restlessly up and down the room, to the great annoyance of some gentlemen belonging to the gold mines, who with sundry white papers of yellow dust, and peculiar-looking stones beside them, were making calculations over their coffee, at the same untimely hour.

Cunliff left the car waiting at the toll-gate, and began to ascend the familiar fields of Bod Elian with a quick, springing step.

CHAPTER XIX.

KEZIA PROVES AN UNFAITHFUL STEWARD.

THE absence of the master made little difference in the aspect of things at Bod Elian. Knowing so well as everyone there did what he would desire and expect to be done, and the relentless manner with which he would regard any neglect, his absence became almost as impressive as his presence. Kezia felt that it gave a sacred responsibility to her ; and she went about the house with a firmer step, a more erect bearing, and a greater seriousness and earnestness in her watchful eyes. Hirell, seeing that she considered her her chief and most anxious charge, showed a gentle child-like submission as sweet to Kezia as it was unexpected ; for Hirell's will was not generally very yielding to any but Elias, who in his house made all wills bend to his, not by

its making me sad to think, I must not mind that, if it brings to me things that I ought to know."

"What things, Hirell?"

"Don't ask me, Kezia; miserable things."

"Yet you told me you could not help being happy, even in spite of poor Hugh."

"And I told you the truth. I am happy."

"Then what have you to do with these miserable thoughts you speak of?"

"Ah, what have I to do with them?" said Hirell, dropping her work, and playing with the rusty chain above her head, which she leaned against the wall, to hide from Kezia the tears that came into her eyes. "What have I to do with them, Kezia—why, when I am happiest, are they sent down before me—like the unclean creatures in Peter's vision? Like him, Kezia, I sicken and cry '*Not so, Lord!*' but again and again they come."

"I don't know how it is, Hirell, but you never had such thoughts as these before," said Kezia.

"Do not say so, Kezia! I know whom you blame for it."

So saying, she roused herself, and again

took up her work, smiling and shaking her head.

"I blame no one, dear," Kezia protested, "but I can see it is with you as with so many others, these strong earthly affections bring with them so much pain, restlessness, anxiety, and—"

She stopped, and something in her voice made Hirell look at her with a shrewd and loving glance.

"And yet we must believe it to be a gift from heaven," added Kezia.

"The greatest of heaven's wonders," Hirell said; "which I suppose we mortals scarcely know what to do with better than we should know what to do with any of the lesser wonders—the moon or the stars—were they given to us. Ah! Kezia, look, look!"

Kezia glanced inquiringly at her, not knowing where she meant her to look, for Hirell's eyes were bent upon her work. There was on her face a strongly subdued joy, the meaning of which Kezia did not for the moment understand; but soon she heard a step, and the next instant her hand was in Mr. Rymer's, and he was speaking to her with very hearty

friendliness ; and then a few moments later she was away in the house alone, feeling glad she had had presence of mind enough to gather up her work and come in quickly, leaving the two by themselves.

The quiet deep joy and tenderness of Hirell's look as he stood before her, made Cunliff forget everything but her and his own pleasure at their meeting again.

Joy chooses its own seasons for coming to us, and as often as not makes its way to our hearts over sorrow's writhing form. Hirell thought of this as, in a voice of self-reproach, she murmured—taking her hands from Cunliff—

“ Ah poor, poor Hugh !”

“ I know, I have heard all, Hirell,” said Cunliff. “ I will help your father to discover where he is, I will do all I can for him, all that they will let me when he is found. But Hirell, I have come to ask you to spend this day with me as we spent one memorable day together. I have things to say to you that I cannot talk of hurriedly, and I have business which takes me from here again instantly.”

“ Away again ! Instantly,” repeated Hirell.

"Yes, instantly. I must within a few hours be in the neighbourhood of Shrewsbury to see the agent of some great man's property there. I need only spend a few minutes with him, then all the day, this exquisite May-day with you, Hirell, if you will come with me. You will like to look over the castle and grounds. You shall be back here at night. Can you refuse me? The first time I ever asked you to trust me."

"It cannot, cannot be, Mr. Rymer. My father would never forgive me. Ah! he was so hurt when he heard how it was with us. He thought we had practised deception towards him. He never used such words to me before, and to hear *you* spoken of so harshly, that is what I cannot bear. And, Kezia! I am under a solemn promise to my father to be guided by her in all things while he is away, and I know she would never, never consent to my going away—so far too—Oh no, Mr. Rymer, ask me no more."

"Hirell, I do not ask you again, as you have any faith in me—but now I shall go and speak to Kezia myself."

Then leaving Hirell agitated by a great

longing to go—dread of acting wrongly to her father in his absence, and a yet more tender fear of offending Mr. Rymer, in whom she had such perfect reliance, he went into the house, found Kezia, and pleaded his cause before her.

She was terribly startled when she first understood what his request was; but he made the excuses for it so unanswerable, spoke so well of the engrossing nature of his affairs, the shortness of the time at his command, the necessity for Hirell and himself (and here he spoke with a grave seriousness) arranging their plans definitely for the future, and settling how he could best move with regard to Hugh, gave such sacred promises as a gentleman and a man of honour as to the care he would take of Hirell, and the hour at which he would bring her safely back to Bod Elian; in short, so impressed and overpowered the timid Kezia, that she was already half inclined to yield, when Hirell came in, and added her entreaties to her lover's.

She assured Kezia she would not for the world consent to this, still less urge it, if, after thought and prayer, it seemed to her

wrong. But she had thought and had asked counsel, and felt sure no warning against it had entered her heart. She asked Kezia if her conduct since her father's departure had given her cause to doubt or trust her ; and at that question the sweetness of her humility and submission came to Kezia's heart, and moved her lips to a trembling consent.

Mr. Rymer gallantly kissed her hand, and Hirell's sweet eyes looked their thanks. In less than a quarter-of-an-hour they were gone, and Kezia sitting alone, her heart full of misgivings.

Suppose Elias should return before the day was out. What would he say to her ? What an unfaithful steward would he think her ? How slowly the time went in her loneliness. When would the day and her anxiety be over ?

It was yet early in the afternoon when she was sitting with her work on the old mounting-stone, and her eyes most unreasonably beginning already to look for the return of her charge, when she heard a step the sound of which turned all her vague anxiety to very painful and certain fear.

She rose and turned. Elias was toiling up the path, his face and attitude eloquent of failure, fatigue, hopelessness.

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